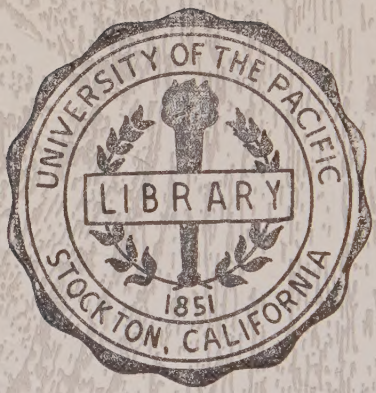
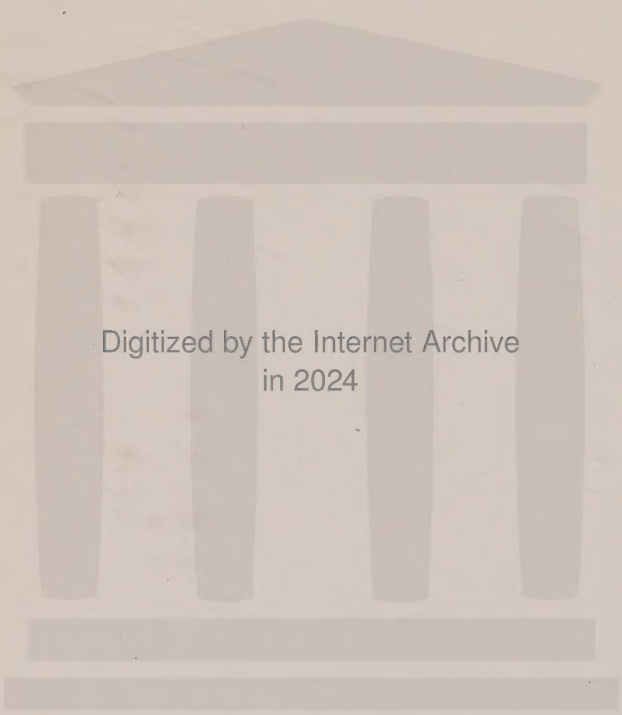

UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC
LIBRARY
1851
STOCKTON, CALIFORNIA

WITHDRAWN

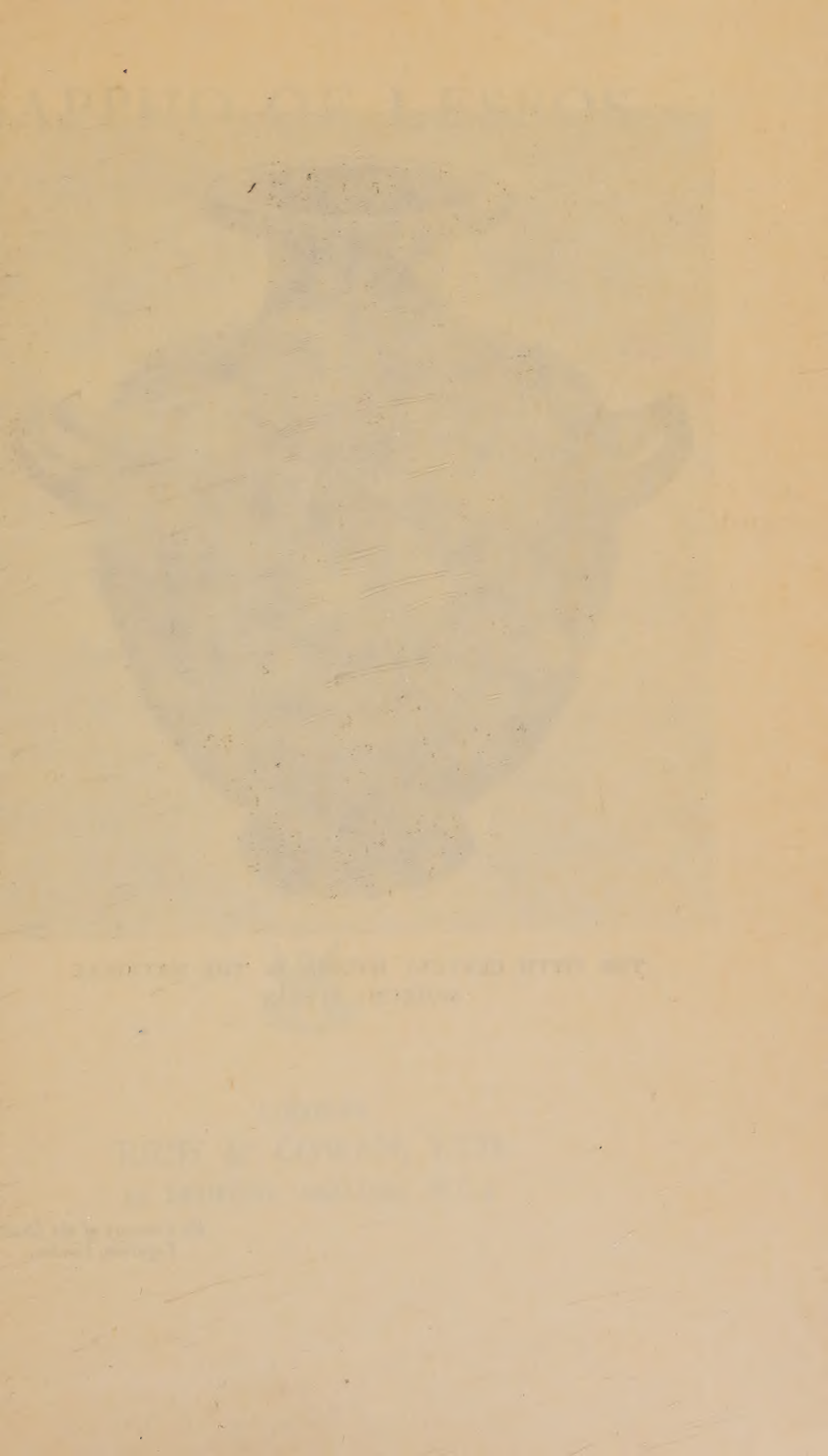

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2024

https://archive.org/details/sapphooflesbosps0000marg

SAPPHO OF LESBOS

Other works by
THE SAME AUTHOR

FREDERICK THE GREAT
JOHN THE BAPTIST
CHRISTINA OF SWEDEN
SEVEN WOMEN AGAINST THE WORLD
MARIA THERESA OF AUSTRIA
FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE
JOSEPH



THE FIFTH CENTURY HYDRIA IN THE NATIONAL MUSEUM, ATHENS

By Courtesy of the Greek Legation, London.

SAPPHO OF LESBOS

A Psychological Reconstruction of her Life

By

MARGARET GOLDSMITH

"Somebody, I tell you, will remember us hereafter . . ."
SAPPHO.

LONDON
RICH & COWAN, LTD.
37 BEDFORD SQUARE, W.C.1.

39340

First published 1938

Ja - 8 '41

MADE IN GREAT BRITAIN

PRINTED AND BOUND BY RICHARD CLAY AND SONS, LIMITED, BUNGAY, SUFFOLK
FOR MESSRS. RICH AND COWAN, LIMITED, 37 BEDFORD SQUARE, LONDON, W.C.I.
ON PAPER SUPPLIED BY GERALD JUDD, LIMITED.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

AS few definite facts are known about Sappho of Lesbos, this biography must, of course, be largely imaginative. I have not entered into the disputes which learned scholars have carried on for centuries concerning Sappho. This is a psychological biography written by a layman for laymen, and not a dissertation written for classical scholars.

I have accepted the dates generally believed to be correct about Sappho, but for the rest I have concentrated on her character as expressed in the fragments of her work handed down to us. Her personality, and a purely arbitrary selection of historians' opinions, have given me the basis of this biography. I have tried to describe Sappho's life as it appears to me, as I myself am convinced that she must have lived it.

Nor have I, in this reconstruction of her life, adopted any of the moral prejudices against her which caused the Church, centuries after her death, to burn as many of her poems as possible.

The quotations from the works of Sappho and her contemporaries included in this book have been taken from the *Lyra Graeca*, compiled by Professor J. M. Edmonds, in the Loeb Classical Library, first published by William Heinemann in 1922. Where other sources have been quoted, this is expressly stated.

Suidas' *Lexicon:* "Sappho: Daughter of Simon or of Eunominus, or of Eurygyus, or of Ecrytus, or of Semus, or of Scamon, or of Euarchus, or of Scamandronymus; mother's name Cleïs. A Lesbian of Eresus, a lyric poetess; flourished in the 42nd Olympiad (612–609 B.C.) along with Alcaeus, Stesichorus, Pittacus. She had three brothers, Larichus, Chraxus, Eurygyus. She was married to a very rich man called Cercolas (or Cercylas) who came from Andros, and had by him a daughter named Cleïs. She had three companions or friends, Atthis, Telesippa, and Megara, to whom she was slanderously declared to be bound by an impure affection. Her pupils or disciples were Anagora of Miletus, Gongyla of Colophon, Euneica of Salamis. She wrote nine books of lyric poems, and was the inventor of the quill for striking the lyre. She wrote also 'inscriptions,' iambic verse, and monodies."

CHAPTER ONE

NO one has ever questioned Sappho's genius. Writing six centuries after her death, Strabo, the Greek historian, called her a marvel, and added that " in all the centuries since history began, we know of no woman who could be said with any approach to truth to have rivalled her as a poet."

One of her nineteenth-century critics remarked that " of all the poets in the world . . . Sappho is the one whose every word . . . has the seal of absolute perfection," and she would undoubtedly have been an outstanding artist in any generation. Without question, however, her genius was stimulated by the great age in which she lived.

Every age is more or less self-satisfied, and many are conceited; but the importance of the era into which Sappho was born has stood the test of history and of time. The sixth and seventh centuries before the birth of Christ were momentous in the development of mankind. It was a period of tremendous intellectual activity, of growing intellectual curiosity. The growth of Greek civilisation in Greece, in Asia Minor and in Southern Italy marked the birth of Western civilisation.

So many great achievements were accomplished when Sappho lived, that her generation must have been overwhelmed by the progress humanity was making. In Athens, shortly before her birth, Draco

was crystallising laws into a written code, thus depriving the aristocracy of their privilege of ruling by their own unwritten laws, and Solon, her contemporary, was the founder of Athens' real greatness. Thales of Miletus, the father of Greek philosophy, was discovering the sciences of geometry and astronomy; he was, as Aristotle declared, the man to initiate the investigation of physical beginnings without Myths. Thales' friend, Anaximander, the earliest evolutionist, was the first man who tried to draw a map of the world, and one of the earliest Greek writers in prose. Democedes of Croton, the first practising physician of whom we have knowledge, and Pythagoras, a mystic and yet an eminent physicist, were born during Sappho's lifetime.

Politically, as is usually the case when human values are rapidly changing, this was an era of social discontent. The monarchies governing the many individual Greek States during the Heroic Age had been superseded by oligarchies, and when Sappho was born in 612 B.C., they, too, were passing away and unconstitutional despots were taking the place of kings. The people, encouraged by these tyrants, in whom their faith was often misplaced, were learning to rebel against the inherited political and religious privileges of the aristocracy. These despots therefore, undermining as they were the nobles' ancient rights, were actually paving the way for future democracies.

The political unrest stimulated Greek poets, many

of whom wrote political verse, for art and politics were not divided into two separate compartments of human endeavour as they have been by many later generations. In this connection it should be remembered that Solon had disfranchised any man in Athens who, during a civil war, did not fight with one side or the other. This means that the great poets did not stand quietly aside writing verse, while political upheavals shook the State to which they belonged.

Sappho felt keenly the political insecurity of this changing age—she was twice exiled for political reasons—and she belonged to a race, the Æolian, in whom the expression of this restlessness seemed to be more subjective than it was in other parts of the Greek Empire.

> The energies [Symonds wrote in his *Studies of the Greek Poets*] which the Ionians divided between pleasure, politics, trade, legislation, science and the arts, and which the Dorians turned to war and statecraft and social economy, were restrained by the Æolians within the sphere of individual emotions, ready to burst forth, volcanically.

Sappho was proud of being an Æolian, and she was passionately attached to the island of Lesbos, where she was born, and where she lived the greater part of her life. For it should not be forgotten that many of the important achievements of this period were contributed not by men in the Greek motherland, but by her colonials in distant coast cities and islands. Greek civilisation was indebted to Ionia in the west,

and the Ægean in the east, for some of its greatest scientists and philosophers.

Among the Ægean Islands, off the coast of Asia Minor, Lesbos had played a prominent part since that island was settled by colonists from Bœotia in the tenth century before Christ.

In the *Odyssey* the island is already mentioned as "fair established Lesbos." When Sappho lived, the inhabitants were respected as the leaders of the Greeks in Asia Minor, and the vigorous Lesbian Æolians contributed actively to the rising civilisation of the sixth and seventh centuries. The height of Lesbos' virile prosperity was reached late in the seventh century, at the time of Sappho's birth. Unlike the aristocrats of Sparta, who were warriors, or those in Athens, who were farmers or large landowners, the nobles of Lesbos were far-sighted and cosmopolitan merchants, keenly interested in the world beyond their own island home.

Sappho was born on the west coast of the island, in Eresos, a town built by the early Bœotian colonists on a steep hill overlooking the Ægean. But despite this aloofness of its geographical position, Eresos was never isolated or provincial. The inhabitants were in constant touch with the Greek mainland, only a hundred miles away in the west. On clear days one could see the coast of Greece dimly outlined in the distance. The shore below Eresos was curved, forming a natural harbour, and ships from Greece, as well

as from the Troad or the Hellespont, sixty miles to the north, called regularly at this Lesbian port.

Eresos was famous, not only for the beauty of the hilly landscape behind the town, but for the fertility of the soil as well. The barley grown in the fields surrounding Eresos, and the bread made of it, were well known throughout the ancient world.

Archestratos, who wrote a cookery book in the fourth century, mentions the barley bread baked on the "sea-girt hill of famous Eresos," and says that it was "whiter than the driven snow."

The aristocracy, to which Sappho's father belonged, did not live in Eresos itself, but by the sea, in large white houses along the coast. These residences were separated from each other by gardens and cyprus groves. It is most probable that Sappho was born in one of these houses, where she was surrounded by natural beauty from her earliest childhood. There were no ugly sights or sounds to disturb her young mind, and as long as she could remember she loved the sea.

The name Sappho, meaning clear-voiced or bright—Sappha, as she herself pronounced it in the soft Æolic dialect she spoke—was not unusual in Lesbos. Even before she became famous, and it was the fashion to call girls after her, there were many Sapphos on the island.

Sappho's early childhood was very happy. Cleïs, her mother, who was not yet twenty when Sappho was

born, had a rare gift for instinctive motherhood. She was a tall woman, and when she crossed a room or the courtyard in her flowing *chiton*, Sappho was reminded of the gentle swaying of trees, which bend gracefully to the wind, but do not break. Cleïs never gave sharp orders, either to the slaves or to her children, but she was always implicitly obeyed.

By temperament, she was sufficiently like her daughter to deal wisely with this precocious child. Above all, Cleïs realised that fear was never an effective stimulus in education, and as a result Sappho never lied to her mother. The girl's spirit remained free, she said what she thought, and she thought what she felt like thinking. She was never cramped or thwarted in her youth.

Sappho's father, Scamandronymus, a robust, optimistic, jovial, but never insensitive young man, did not interfere with his wife's authority in the home. Sappho was never confused by disagreements between her parents, by two divergent and puzzling answers to any of her many questions.

The preference Sappho later showed for women was not in any way due to her relationship with her father. Cleïs, whom she adored, was the centre of her infant world, but she was extremely fond of Scamandronymus. She loved him with that tolerant, almost condescending affection so often displayed towards tall and very masculine men by small women and little girls.

Harmony reigned in the home into which Sappho

was born. Outward harmony and inner peace. Both of her parents were young and handsome and without cares. They loved life and each other and they were confident of the future. The gods had blessed them: they knew no anxieties, they were very wealthy, they had perfect health, many interests, each other and their family.

Sappho was their eldest child. Neither Cleïs nor Scamandronymus felt the slightest disappointment, much less resentment, because she was a girl. Lesbos was not Sparta, where female infants were cherished and made strong only because they were the future mothers of soldiers. In Lesbos, where women were highly respected, daughters were welcome.

If Sappho had been born in another part of the Empire, some of her vitality might have been expended in rebellion, in freeing herself from the irksome conventions which restrained gifted women. As it was, this was not necessary, for women enjoyed more freedom in Lesbos than they did anywhere else in Greece.

> Æolian women [as John Addington Symonds writes] were not confined to the harem like Ionians, or subjected to the rigorous discipline of the Spartans. While mixing freely with male society, they were highly educated, and accustomed to express their sentiments to an extent unknown elsewhere in history—until, indeed, the present time. The Lesbian ladies applied themselves successfully to literature. They formed clubs for the cultivation of poetry and music. They studied the art of beauty, and sought to refine metrical form and diction.

> Nor did they confine themselves to the scientific side of Art. Unrestrained by public opinion, and passionate for the beautiful, they cultivated their senses and emotions, and developed their wildest passions. All the luxuries and elegances of life which that climate and the rich valleys of Lesbos could afford, were at their disposal: exquisite gardens, in which the rose and hyacinth spread perfume; river-beds ablaze with oleander and wild pomegranate; olive-groves and fountains, where the cyclamen and violet flowered with feathery maidenhair; pine-shadowed coves where they might bathe in the tideless sea. . . . Nor was a brief but biting winter wanting to give tone to their nerves, and, by contrast with the summer, to prevent the palling of so much luxury and sated senses.

From her very birth, Sappho's parents took it for granted that she would share with any sons they might have in the future all the benefits that the civilisation and beauty of their age could give her.

She was not their only child for long. In quick succession, Cleïs gave birth to three sons: Charaxus, Eurygyus, and Larichos. From the time Sappho was conscious of her surroundings, she resented her three brothers: they took up so much of her mother's time, and they, in turn, often turned against her in childish rage because she tried to dominate them.

Cleïs had to be very careful not to hurt Sappho's feelings, but often she found it necessary to be firm with the child. For Sappho made a consistent effort to order her younger brothers about, and this was not difficult; already, as a very small child, she had far

more strength of character than they had. Charaxus showed signs of that stubbornness which goes with weakness, while Sappho had real force. She was a personality when she was very young.

Sappho's brothers were conspicuously handsome in an age which was outstanding for physical beauty, an age which worshipped beauty and looked down on ugliness almost as a vice.

> Nowhere [as Symonds says] in any age of Greek history, or in any part of Hellas, did the love of physical beauty, the sensibility to radiant scenes of nature, the consuming fervour of personal feeling, assume such grand proportions and receive so illustrious an expression as they did in Lesbos.

Larichos, Sappho's youngest brother, was later chosen as a cup-bearer at the town hall in Mitylene. This office was reserved for the handsomest among handsome youths. And all three of her brothers were tall even as children, whereas Sappho was abnormally small.

In her youth, in the peaceful villa on the coast near Eresos, Sappho was still unaware that she herself was not beautiful. The disturbing realisation that her nose was too long and her mouth too wide came to her later, when her brother Charaxus laughed at her one day and brutally told her that she was ugly.

As a small girl she was troubled only by the alarming fact that Charaxus, her rival in games, and, so she thought, in her mother's affections, who was more than a year younger than she was, should be a few

inches taller. This hurt her pride and her vanity, she felt that her prestige in the family had been offended, and she longed to be tall—taller than any of her brothers.

When she was five, Phœbe, the slave-girl of twelve or thirteen, whose duty it was to look after Sappho, came excitedly to Cleïs one night, to say that the child was not in her bed. Cleïs found her, out in the courtyard, reaching her arms up to the sky, and straining her small body to its full height.

"What on earth are you doing, Sappho?" Cleïs asked in surprise.

"I am trying to make myself grow faster," Sappho answered seriously. "I want to be taller than Charaxus, and besides, I want to be so tall that I can pick a star from the sky."

Many years later, with a different implication, and after she had been disillusioned about the stars, Sappho wrote:

"With my two arms I do not aspire to touch the sky."

Later, when Cleïs saw her sturdy sons holding out their strong hands for some object they were determined to possess, she often thought of little Sappho reaching up with such hopeless eagerness to the sky.

Cleïs had to admit that if her sons were greedy, they never showed it: their manners when they helped themselves to fruit on a table or anything else they wanted, were unimpeachable; they were Greek

gentlemen. But Cleïs could not help comparing their well-poised acquisitiveness with the gesture of Sappho's hands, held upwards, reaching for something she could never grasp. And, as the years passed, Cleïs was sure that there was indeed something extraordinary about her daughter Sappho, her eldest child.

When Sappho was six years old, her peaceful life came abruptly to an end. A war, which continued for ten years and was to have a lasting effect on her life, broke out between Athens and Lesbos. The five Lesbian cities, Mytilene, Methymna, Antissa, Eresos and Pyrrha, in common with most Greek municipalities, were governed quite separately, but in this war they were, of course, united for the joint defence of the island.

A war waged by a Greek colony, no matter how old it was, against any of the cities on the mainland was worse and more frightening than an ordinary war. Such a war, really a civil war, was as distressing as a conflict between a parent and a child. The Greek colonies were politically independent of the mother country, but the feeling of solidarity, of affection for Greece was tremendously strong. The colonials and the Greeks themselves never forgot that they belonged to the same race, the same civilisation, that, above all, they worshipped the same gods.

Only a violent quarrel, therefore, between a city on the mainland and a colony could lead to an open

breach or to war. In this case, the Lesbians felt, and rightly so, that their entire economic existence was at stake. For the Athenian merchants were trying to take possession of Sigeum, a port on the Ægean off the Hellespont. Sigeum was essential to the Lesbians in their grain trade with the Troad and with Egypt.

The Athenians, on the other hand, struggling against the financial crisis which was endangering the city at this period of its history, were stubbornly clinging to the economic advantages they had maintained abroad.

Geographically Eresos was more immediately involved in this war than the other cities of Lesbos, because Eresos was only about fifty or sixty miles by sea from Sigeum. And Eresos, nearer the Greek mainland than any other settlement in Lesbos, would be the first to be attacked and exposed to a possible invasion.

The unrest which followed the declaration of war weighed down on young Sappho's mind like some horrible nightmare; she had not been accustomed to trouble or disturbance. The grown-up people had always seemed to feel secure about the future, to know what would happen to-morrow, or next month, or when she was older.

Now this feeling of safety was gone. Messengers from the town came in and out, and young Phœbe, whom the child loved intensely, was weeping because her brother had been called up for military service. Cleïs's face, too, had altered. There were lines

on it, Sappho noticed, and her mother looked at Scamandronymus with an anxiety she was obviously trying to conceal from him and from her children. When anyone laughed in the house during these first anxious weeks of the war, there was a forced and unnatural quality about their gaiety. For the first time in her life, Sappho came into contact with something unreal and artificial, and she was puzzled and disturbed. Occasionally Cleïs forced herself to play with her children, and her mother's hollow laughter troubled the child Sappho profoundly.

Then, one evening, there was the noise of preparations in the courtyard, and the next morning her father came out with his shield, his helmet and his spear. He was the only person in the household who was calm and confident. His optimism did not desert him at this critical moment. He said that the war would soon be over—after all, Mitylene had a navy, and the Lesbian cities were standing together. In a few weeks, he assured Cleïs, his ship would return again to the harbour: the war could not possibly last for more than a few months at most. And he meant what he said—Sappho always remembered the complete assurance in his hearty voice—he was not pretending to be hopeful. Unlike her mother and the rest of the household, he was sincerely cheerful; he was positive that he would return safely.

Sappho believed him implicitly, and for this reason the shock of his death, the sight of her mother's agonised

face, was all the more terrible when the news that he had been killed reached them within a very few weeks. Sappho was utterly at a loss. He had promised that he would come back. The necessary sacrifices had been made to the gods, but there was some power, apart from them, something terrifying and unknown, which had prevented him from keeping his promise.

The death of her father was the will of the gods, Phœbe explained. The child then wanted to know why they had chosen to make Cleïs so unhappy—why, why? There was no answer to this question.

Sappho never quite trusted the gods after her father's death in the war. Besides, only one of the deities really appealed to her childish imagination, and that was Aphrodite, the Goddess of Love and of the beauty of women. Everything about this wonderful goddess was pleasing to Sappho. She liked the animals who were sacred to her: the swift-running hare, the peaceful dove, and the humble sparrow, so often neglected when more beautiful birds were to be seen. And Sappho liked the taste of apples and the lasting green of myrtle, and these, too, were dedicated to Aphrodite.

Sappho decided that she would ask her mother whether Aphrodite had known that her father was going to be killed in battle, or whether, because she was concerned with beautiful things, she had not been told by the other gods about this war. But it was difficult these days to ask Cleïs questions. She spoke

rarely, and Sappho knew that she was infinitely sad.

With a great effort Cleïs tried to overcome her grief and turn to the problems of everyday life. In her depression, she felt as though this war would never end—at any rate it would go on for years and years—and she was aware that Eresos was the most exposed and unsafe place on the island. Besides, the conventions demanded that her children be brought up under the guardianship of some male relative, and Eurygyus, an uncle of Scamandronymus, after whom one of Sappho's brothers had been called, had sent a messenger to Eresos, asking her to share his home in Mitylene. She hardly knew Eurygyus, and she had no intention of allowing him to interfere with her in the bringing up of her children, but she realised that it was best for her sons to give them a male protector. She therefore settled her affairs in Eresos, broke up her home, and went to Mitylene with her four children.

Sappho always remembered the journey to Mitylene. Her mother did not speak as they left their house for the last time. There was a longish procession of travelling-carts. She and her mother and brothers sat in the first one, then followed the one with the household gods, then the slaves, who were weeping. The road from Eresos to Mitylene passed through a pine forest. The pine trees were very tall. In later years a strong odour of pine always made Sappho remember sitting between her mother and Phœbe in

the travelling-cart. Phœbe, who had a curious habit of talking to herself when she was excited, was mumbling words of farewell to people she had left in Eresos. Sappho's brothers were half playing, half quarrelling: the preparations for the journey had excited them. But Sappho and Cleïs were very silent. The girl felt vaguely that she must protect her mother.

CHAPTER TWO

"MITYLENE," so Strabo records in his *Geography*, "has two harbours, of which the southern is landlocked and affords anchorage for fifty triremes, and the northern spacious and deep and protected by a breakwater. Both are flanked by a small island upon which part of the city is built. This city is well equipped with every convenience. . . ."

Cleïs and her children did not live by the sea in Mitylene. This was the only time in her life, in all her waking moments, when Sappho did not hear the waves breaking on the rocks, but she could see the Ægean from the windows of her uncle's home. For the duration of the war, the wealthy families who had lived in villas along the shore had moved to houses on the hills behind the town.

There were vineyards and fruit-trees behind Eurygyus' home, and when the children walked up the road to the top of the hill and to the acropolis, they could see the coast of Asia Minor, ten miles across the channel, and Mount Ida looming up in the distance: below them the harbour of Mitylene stretched out to sea, and in the port were warships and merchant-vessels, and men, sailors and merchants and townsmen, running busily back and forth.

Everyone, during the war, seemed to be restless, and even when they sat still, so Sappho thought as she grew older, they lacked repose. They were un-

satisfied and their discontent drove them from activity to activity. It was clear to the shrewd little girl that the grown-ups were trying to escape from themselves, trying to forget the war and the news of battles and of deaths and heroic deeds, and yet they were unable to discuss anything else. Gradually the men and women she knew were less shocked when a brother or a husband or a lover was killed; and when, as a mature woman, she looked back on her childhood, it struck her as one of the most terrible results of the war that, in a few years, or months, people got used to it. They took the war for granted. They no longer seemed to wonder what would happen when peace was finally declared.

Cleïs made an effort to give her children as normal an upbringing as was possible during such troubled times. She tried not to discuss the war with them. This was not always easy, however, as Eurygyus, a plump, middle-aged widower, who had no sons to give to his country—as he would have expressed it, for he frequently used ready-made phrases—was busy being patriotic. He talked wildly about the treachery of the Athenians, forgetting, as many of his fellow-citizens did during the war, that they were of the same race as their enemies.

Cleïs would often change the subject tactfully, when Eurygyus was in one of his ultra-patriotic moods. She felt that this war must, one day, end, and Greece, the Greek Empire, would go on, perhaps forever. And she

wanted her children always to love and respect this Empire.

Eurygyus, however, was not susceptible to tact. He must be pompous even in his sleep, Cleïs decided, soon after she reached Mitylene. He frequently annoyed her by arguing about historical facts, as though the date of a battle could be changed by his vehemence. Besides, he had no sense of humour whatsoever and no independent opinions. He was merely a reflection of conversations with his friends.

Eurygyus often thought Cleïs quite shocking in her modern views of education. Children, he was convinced, should be seen, but never heard. Above all, they should not be treated as equals, as Cleïs treated them. He could not understand why she troubled to answer their questions. Especially girls should be kept in their place, he frequently said, and they should not, like Sappho, be allowed to be so curious about everything.

It was fortunate for Sappho that Eurygyus hated and feared scenes far more than he did modern education, for in the end he grumblingly told Cleïs to do as she liked with her children. He had made several little speeches to Cleïs when she first came to Mitylene. He never talked simply. When they sat on the verandah in the evening, he would tell her in a loud voice that she was too soft and lenient with her children. But his interviews with her never went very well, as far as he was concerned. He could not quite under-

stand what she meant, and he had a secret feeling that she was not taking him seriously. Of course, he was not afraid of her, he assured himself; this was ridiculous. She was a poor little woman who had lost her husband and her husband's guidance in the war, but he finally decided that he was far too busy to bother more than was necessary with the education of his niece and nephews.

As a small child Sappho did not really dislike her plumpish uncle. She felt contempt for him, especially when he showed, as he did on many occasions, that he was at heart a coward, no matter how consistently he played the rôle of the strong, fearless man. He was particularly frightened of the gods, trying in every way to ingratiate himself with them.

Sometimes his blustering annoyed the child Sappho, but usually she thought him funny, and she often amused Phœbe by sticking out her little stomach and imitating him. When Cleïs once discovered her at this game, she reproved her, but Sappho was sensitive enough to know when there was laughter in her mother's voice. Cleïs explained to her that she must not be rude to Eurygyus; she told the child how kind he was to give them a home and to upset the routine of his daily life on their account.

Sappho silenced her mother by remarking, at the age of eight, that Eurygyus loved doing his duty as he saw it—again her voice was raised in imitation of

his—and that he must enjoy telling his friends about his own generosity.

Cleïs laughed and agreed with Sappho. She agreed with her about many things. The feeling of solidarity between them grew stronger with the years. Cleïs discussed her problems with the child, she treated her as though she were a grown-up person. Soon Sappho felt that she must share with her mother the responsibility of her three younger brothers.

It is surprising that a woman as intelligent as Cleïs did not realise what psychic harm she was inflicting on her sons by this obvious favouritism of her only daughter. Larichos and Eurygyus were, at times, angry and jealous of Sappho, but they did not really care. Charaxus, however, a reserved and difficult lad, who hid his longing for affection behind a rude, stubborn manner, resented Cleïs's preference for Sappho so deeply that he never overcame his antagonism towards his sister.

Naturally, in view of Cleïs' attitude towards Sappho, she was determined to give Sappho as thorough an education as her sons. The one concession, however, which she made to Eurygyus' old-fashioned views was that Sappho learned the so-called " feminine arts " as well as book-learning. She was taught how to cook, how to embroider tapestry, and how to weigh the wool for the slaves. She went about these tasks with obvious boredom, her mouth set firmly. She disliked doing anything she did not do well, and she seemed

incapable of overcoming her awkwardness when she performed domestic duties. Her little body visibly relaxed when these were done and she could join her brothers in their classes.

In ancient Greece, boys were, as a rule, educated in private schools until they were eighteen. Sitting on a low stool, Sappho and her brothers used their knees as a writing-table, and learned to write on wax tablets with ivory stylets. When they were older they were allowed to write with ink on wooden tablets.

Sappho studied grammar and geometry, drawing and literature. By the time she was ten she knew long passages from Homer by heart, and as she and her brothers had an enlightened teacher, who was not infected by the war hysteria—Cleïs had chosen this schoolmaster—they learned about Dracon's laws and the great achievements of Athens, their temporary enemy.

In common with all Greek children, Sappho was brought up on the romantic legends of the Trojan Wars. The fact that Helen, a beautiful woman, and yet half a goddess, as she was the daughter of Zeus, had been the cause of this war, impressed young Sappho deeply.

When she was an accomplished poet, she frequently referred to Helen, and to Helen's great beauty.

Often Cleïs, seeing Sappho's flushed young face buried in a scroll, as she sat eagerly reading, would remind the child that there must be proportion,

symmetry in all things, and that she must not allow her interest in Homer to distract her from other subjects so important in her general education. She must never be one-sided, Cleïs pointed out to her gently, music and, above all, dancing were quite as essential as literature.

> The dance of the Hellenes [as Hans Licht emphasises in his *Sexual Life in Ancient Greece*] is the science of rhythm and mimic art; that is, it is the bodily expression of an internal idea and works through movement as poetry through the word. Hence the Greek dance was a real art, no aimless turning round, but always the rhythmical representation of internal processes, in the expression of which all parts of the body, not least the hands and arms, participated. Hence the Greeks, rejoicing in beauty, took extraordinary delight in performances of the art of dancing, in which men diligently exercised their youth in order to make splendid their festivals and spectacles as also their banquets, and other private festivities.

Sappho went with her brothers to the academy where children were given music and dancing lessons. Lesbos was famous for her musical achievements, and musical standards were extremely high. Terpander, the poet, and one of the earliest Greek musicians, had lived and died, shortly before her birth, in Antissa, near Eresos. And according to a legend, the head and lyre of Orpheus had been carried to Lesbos from the mouth of the Hebrus.

Sappho was conscious of the musical tradition of her home. Cleïs had often told her that one must not

sing or play any instrument unless one did it unusually well. The child showed such remarkable talent for the lyre and the flute that her masters were profoundly impressed, and if Cleïs had not been very firm they would have allowed her to use her lovely voice when she was too young.

As a child Sappho was never in the least embarrassed when Cleïs asked her to sing or to play the lyre in the presence of guests. She performed as naturally as she slept or ate or drank; the songs she had learned seemed to be a part of her, and often, when she swung slowly back and forth in the swing under the verandah in the court, she hummed tunes, or recited little verses which she had made up herself.

Her self-consciousness came later when she was fully aware of her appearance. She was too small for her age. Even for a Greek, her black hair was unusually thick and coarse, her eyes, though bright and extremely intelligent, were not very large. In a country and an age worshipping physical beauty, it was inevitable that Sappho, or any child, should have been acutely and disturbingly aware of her ugliness.

Besides, her brother Charaxus, who bitterly resented her success among their school-fellows and their masters, now chided her frequently because she was not pretty. He often spoke of her as "my hideous sister." These insults were all the worse for Sappho because Charaxus was a coward, and only taunted her when Cleïs was not present to defend and comfort her.

For years Sappho prayed fervently to the gods that, when she grew up, her mouth and nose would become smaller, and she would grow and grow until she was as tall as Aphrodite herself. The child did not know that, though her body was small, she was graceful in every gesture and movement, that her enchanting smile would, one day, cause people to forget the size of her mouth. She could not realise that her voice—"her low voice, laughter laden," as Alcæus later described it—would be remembered twenty-five centuries after her death.

Even Cleïs could not foretell that the amazing charm of Sappho's mind would cause her contemporaries, and later generations, to forget her lack of physical perfection, that historians would speak of the "fierce flame of Sappho's loveliness," and that Plato, in his *Phædrus*, has Socrates refer to her as "the beautiful Sappho" because, as Maximus of Tyre points out, "of the beauty of her lyric verse, although she was small and dark." Centuries later, Swinburne, one of Sappho's greatest admirers, spoke of

> The small dark body's Lesbian loveliness
> That held the fire eternal.

Cleïs was troubled. She knew that Sappho was unhappy, that, despite her outstanding talents, she felt inferior to other children, because she was not beautiful. Cleïs waited; she understood her daughter, and she realised that she could never broach this subject until Sappho said something first. Sappho

was intensely reserved: she never spoke easily of things which moved or troubled her.

One day, when Sappho was about twelve, she went down to the sea to bathe with her mother. Cleïs felt that the girl was in one of her rare communicative moods.

Suddenly she asked Cleïs: "Why have the gods not made me beautiful?"

Cleïs hesitated; she knew that her answer, whatever it was, would make an unforgettable impression on the child.

"Perhaps, Sappho," she said—"perhaps they have other and more precious gifts to give you. Perhaps they have given you charm, and great talent."

"Charm?" Sappho repeated, letting the sand flow slowly through her fingers, and Cleïs glanced with pride at the girl's exquisite hands, her long, tapering fingers. "Charm? You mean: the old market-women smile when they see me, people seem glad when I come? Is that charm?"

"Yes, Sappho," Cleïs said. "Yes, just that. People smile. They are happy when they see you. Women and men. And women rarely smile at charm in another woman; they feel it too, but they do not always smile at the beauty of another woman."

Sappho did not quite understand, but she was vaguely relieved. She did not care so much about men, but she wanted the women and girls to smile when she passed them in the road. It was for them

that she longed to be beautiful. But though she discussed almost everything with her mother, she was curiously shy of mentioning this desire.

She rose quickly, slipped out of her fine linen tunic, ran down the beach and into the sea. Cleïs looked after her, smiling; Sappho's gestures were very definite when she wished to indicate that for her a subject was closed. And Cleïs always respected these gestures.

CHAPTER THREE

CLEÏS died when Sappho was in her early teens. The death of her father in her childhood had been a shock, but the loss of her mother meant personal desolation. It took Sappho years to overcome the effects of her mother's death. Without Cleïs, Sappho was lost. The child had always lived so much in her imagination, in the fantasies of her own mind, that she had not yet established any workable contact with reality. Cleïs had been her bridge to the real world. Sappho's longing for Cleïs is expressed in the fragment of a poem she wrote later:

> So like a child, after its mother, I flutter. . . .

Cleïs had given her a sense of security, and for a long time after her death life seemed to overwhelm Sappho. "The spirit within her turned chill," as she expressed her cold loneliness many years later.

Fortunately for Sappho, her brothers were young and needed her, and her Uncle Eurygyus was fussy, and utterly lacking in any talent for dealing with young children. Sappho's feeling of responsibility towards her brothers was highly developed, and for several years she considered it her greatest duty to try to protect them against Eurygyus' influence.

As she grew older, Sappho realised that the energy she had invested in her brothers was wasted. The two older ones, Charaxus and Eurygyus, preferred their uncle's stilted, old-fashioned views to her more modern

attitude towards life, and they resented what they considered her interference in their upbringing. Larichos, the youngest and most beautiful of her brothers, was a lovable young man, who graciously received the attention men and women showered upon him, but he was weak. He was fond of Sappho, in so far as he was capable of caring for anyone but himself, and when she was with him, he agreed with her. But he acquiesced as passively in Eurygyus' opinions. Larichos was, in fact, as Sappho decided with a sigh, one of those people who is not a personality in himself, but merely the reflection of the person who happened to be talking with him.

Sappho's brothers never took her part when Eurygyus reproved her, and he became increasingly difficult. He was the type of man who was fundamentally so unsure of himself that he would have been an anti-feminist in any generation. He objected irrationally to everything she did—to her interest in poetry and politics, to her extravagant taste in clothes. He disapproved of her chiefly because she puzzled him, and he had an innate dislike of any thing or any person he could not understand.

He was often enraged by Sappho because she was obviously not cut out from one piece, and he had a profound dislike and distrust of inconsistency. She did not fit into any of his preconceived patterns of various types of women. If a young girl insisted on being highbrow, he once told her in a state of great

agitation, and on dabbling in politics which were no concern of hers, then she should be thoroughly highbrow and be done with it. That was bad enough; but if she was highbrow, she then had no right to be ultra-feminine as well, and wear those new-fangled slippers with high heels which were just coming into fashion.

Eurygyus' annoyance with Sappho was usually expressed in definite objections to what he considered her extreme manner of dressing. Shortly after Cleïs' death, he had occasionally argued with her about her unwomanly views, her longing for independence, but in these discussions he got the worst of it. She always remained unruffled, she always had an answer. Her mind baffled him and he felt vaguely that, in these arguments, he was making a fool of himself.

It was much easier for him to ask in a general way what the world was coming to when young girls wore garments of such vivid colours or used as much rouge as she did, or to declare that no young woman of her age was justified in darkening her eyelids with green kohl. So he concentrated his attacks in remarks about her clothes, he held forth about his contempt for Ionian fashions and the Ionian love of luxury, which, so he said, were emasculating the inhabitants of Lesbos.

Sappho realised that Eurygyus' outbursts were an end in themselves. He was weak, and he shrank from taking decisive action. Sappho understood him

perfectly, for already she had an acute instinct for other people. Despite his weakness, she knew that she must not try her uncle too far, or he might become a serious problem. Notwithstanding his remonstrances, she continued to anoint her hair with sweet-smelling oil, but she never went as far as dyeing it, much as she longed for blonde instead of coal-black hair. She knew when to stop.

She might, when he objected to her clothes, have pointed out that he was less severe with the singing-girls who often came and performed at his *symposia*. But she had met Chloe, one of these girls, and thereafter the subject of his dancing-girls was one which Sappho was too reserved to mention. Her disgust at his attitude towards women made her intensely angry, and sometimes the sight of Eurygyus, so plump and self-satisfied and insensitive, made her loathe him.

Chloe herself was quite unimportant, but her influence on Sappho's development was not. One summer night, when Sappho was about twelve, she had crept out and stood in the portico, facing the dining-hall beyond.

Eurygyus sat drinking with his friends. He had been appointed as the "ruler of the drinking" for the evening, and he had obviously decided that a great deal of wine was to be served. Sappho had never seen him drunk before, and this view of him, his bald, shining head garlanded with red roses, was unforgettably repulsive to her. She hated drunkenness

throughout her life, and though in Lesbos Dionysus was worshipped more ardently than in almost any other part of the Greek Empire, wine is rarely mentioned in those of her poems which have been preserved for us.

That summer night, when Sappho slipped over to the window and watched Eurygyus' *symposium*, he was trying to pull Chloe, the most attractive of the dancing-girls in the room, down to his couch. The girl shrank back, and Sappho always remembered with repugnance the sight of his fat hand on her delicate shoulder.

Naturally Sappho was æsthetically and not morally shocked, for she lived in an unpuritanical age, when sex was freely discussed and there were few taboos. As long as she could remember, she had heard the slaves discuss what happened at the Aphrodisia festival celebrated in honour of Aphrodite. Young as she was, therefore, Sappho understood her uncle's gestures perfectly.

Standing alone in the dark portico, Sappho suddenly felt that she must do something to help the girl inside the room. She ran quickly to the centre of the courtyard, picked up a small pebble, and aimed it at the drinking-cup in Eurygyus' other hand. She missed her aim, and the little stone hit him in the stomach. He was not hurt—physically, at any rate—but his vanity was deeply offended and, furious, he rose jerkily, spilling the wine over his tunic. Chloe

escaped, probably to the protection of one of Eurygyus' guests who was more attractive than their host.

Sappho had hurried quietly to her room, thinking she had rescued the beautiful dancer from all the men at the party. Galahad had not yet been invented, but Sappho felt like him. She was curiously exalted, though she herself could not have said why this incident should make her so strangely happy. She did not know then that Chloe had seen her out in the courtyard and wondered who she was.

Women like Chloe have a way of finding out what they want to know, and she soon learned that Eurygyus had a niece. The next time she came to one of his supper-parties—obviously she was not as repelled by him as Sappho had been—she slipped away after her host had drunk plenty of wine and found Sappho.

Chloe did not return to the dining-room until the guests were leaving. She had enjoyed a charming experience, one of many, perhaps vaguely remembered in later years, when Sappho had become famous, but Sappho's whole attitude towards life, towards men and towards women, had changed, or rather matured. She often sat pensively before the hand-mirror Chloe had given her: a beautiful disk of polished bronze, the handle of which was a small figure of Aphrodite.

Emotionally Sappho had grown up, and after she met Chloe she was strangely silent for many days,

writing verses which she hid carefully whenever she left her uncle's house.

She left it more and more often. Her greater knowledge of herself made her feel free, more sure of herself, and she was no longer disturbed when Eurygyus came upon her unexpectedly in the market-place listening to political discussions. When she was fifteen, and considered a young lady, he could not object to her going to the market, as Mitylene was not Athens or another Greek city where respectable women did not go out alone. But he persisted in his remonstrances when he was told by his friends that she had taken part in political discussions, and it enraged him when men who had been present quoted her astute and precocious remarks.

Speculations as to what would happen after the war against Athens was over were now the chief topic of conversation. Even the most stubborn patriots, like Eurygyus, had to admit that Mitylene could not resist the Athenians much longer.

Before the war—Suidas, in his *Lexicon*, places these events in 612 B.C., the year of Sappho's birth—Mitylene had been disrupted by unrest, and the opposing factors in this civil struggle were now held together only by their common adversary, by their joint efforts to win the war. Melanchros, a particularly ruthless tyrant, had usurped the supreme power in the town and declared himself absolute ruler.

The nobles, who detested Melanchros, chiefly because he curtailed their inherited privileges, organised a revolt against him, and his party was defeated. Melanchros himself was killed during this rebellion. The leaders of this uprising were Pittacus, one of the Seven Wise Men of Greece, and Cicis and Antimonidas, the elder brothers of Alcæus, a poet almost as famous as Sappho was herself.

After Melanchros' defeat, the less far-sighted nobles were antagonistic towards Pittacus, a simple man of the people, whose brains and initiative had been useful to them while they were still oppressed by Melanchros. Though Pittacus was a potential tyrant, and thus a danger to the aristocrats, he was, above all, a man of their own choosing. For this reason, the majority of the nobles continued for a time to support him, and the efforts of the minority to undermine Pittacus' increasing influence had been abruptly cut short by the war against Athens. For again the aristocracy needed him: Pittacus was as able a soldier and strategist as he was an astute politician, and he was a man of rare common sense.

Ultimately, the island of Lesbos could not successfully resist the overwhelming majority of the Athenians. In 596, after a last fierce battle, the Athenians finally took possession of Sigeum. But, as far as their losses were concerned, this victory—the entire war, in fact—had cost the Athenians more than the port was worth. The Athenian commander, Phrynon, was killed in this

final battle in a hand-to-hand struggle with Pittacus, whose popularity, because of his valour at the front, had increased tremendously when he returned to Lesbos. Periander, the ruler of Corinth, a scholarly man with a genius for seeing both sides of any question, was invited to come to the island to act as arbiter between Athens and Lesbos.

The story of Periander's private life intrigued Sappho, and she looked forward with interest to his arrival. In a jealous rage, Periander had struck his wife Melissa when she was pregnant. She had suffered a miscarriage and died. Sappho pictured to herself his remorse, his efforts to communicate with the spirit of his dead wife, his hopes to find distraction in the arts and in literature. He stimulated Sappho's imagination: at last a man was coming to Mitylene who was a personality, who would offer some distraction from the dull routine of life.

Besides, Arion, the well-known Lesbian poet, who had been living in Corinth at Periander's court, was coming to Mitylene with his patron. As a very small child Sappho had been thrilled by the fantastic story of Arion's escape from drowning, a story which has been preserved because Herodotus wrote about it in his *Histories*.

> Periander was despot of Corinth [Herodotus wrote]. During his lifetime, according to the Corinthians—and indeed the Lesbians—a very marvellous thing took place, namely the rescue of Arion of Methymna from the sea at

Tænarum by a dolphin. This Arion was the finest singer to the lyre then known, and is the first recorded composer of dithyrambs, which he named and trained Corinthian choirs to perform.

It seems that he spent most of his life at the court of Periander; but one day, conceiving a desire to visit Italy and Sicily, he did so, and sometime afterwards, having made large sums of money there, determined to return to Corinth.

Accordingly he set sail from Tarentum, chartering a vessel manned by Corinthians, a people whom he thought, of all men, he could trust. But when they reached the open sea the crew conspired to secure his money by throwing him overboard. . . .

Putting on all his harper's dress and grasping the lyre, he took his stand in the sternsheets, and went through the Orthian or Highpitched Nome from the beginning to the end. Then he threw himself just as he was, dress and all, into the sea.

The crew continued their voyage to Corinth, but meanwhile a dolphin, it seems, took Arion upon his back and carried him ashore at Tænarum. . . . There is a small bronze votive offering on the promontory of Tænarum, consisting of a man upon a dolphin's back.

* * * * * *

Sappho longed to show her verse to Arion, or to anyone who could tell her whether it was good, but she was shrewd enough to feel that a man, who spent his life at the court of a dictator, though he may have ridden on the back of a dolphin, might have little time for anonymous young writers. She did not seriously think that Arion would help her, she did

not even know how she could possibly meet him while he was in Mitylene.

Her uncle knew no poets. His friends were merchants or ambitious politicians. Sometimes Eurygyus' house seemed to Sappho like a prison from which there was no escape. The end of the war made her hopeful that a new era would begin, and the ceaseless talk of victories and defeats, of physical courage in battle would come to an end. In ten years of war the patriotism of the Lesbians had become exhausting and dull.

The man she wanted to meet more than anyone else was Alcæus, a fellow-Mitylenian, who was at this time more notorious for his unconventional exploits than he was appreciated as a poet. In fact, the good citizens of Mitylene were shocked to learn that he so far forgot his duties as a soldier as to write love songs, and sing them, on the battle-field. For in all ages good citizens, far behind the firing-line, expect soldiers at the front to concentrate on their job.

Alcæus' lack of military enthusiasm was remembered for centuries, and five hundred years after his death, Horace, in one of his *Odes*, mentions his habit of remaining an active poet on the field of battle. Alcæus was about ten years older than Sappho, and as a very young lad he had gone to the war, chiefly because, at the time, it had not yet occurred to him that, as the brother of two famous soldiers, he could do anything else. Besides, as is shown in many of

his poems, he glorified war. As the years passed, however, and the fighting continued, he began to ask himself why the Lesbians were involved in this particular war, why he should allow himself to be killed for the sake of the business men and merchants who were interested in the port of Sigeum.

At heart, Alcæus hated the cruelty of war, for though his manner was often gruff, and he assumed a robust and cynical attitude towards life, he was really a sensitive creature. He was one of those men who drink heavily, not so much for pure enjoyment, but to enable him to forget the harsh realities of existence.

"Drink with me and forget," he once wrote to a friend during the war, "for why should I hope to return and see again the unclouded light of the sun?"

Alcæus' fellow-citizens of Mitylene saw only his flippant manner, his destructive wit, his lack of respect for the traditions of battle. In the end he horrified the patriots of Mitylene, and caused an uproar in his own aristocratic class, by simply walking out of the war.

During the battle of Sigeum he finally decided that he would no longer expose himself to the dangers of this war in which he did not believe. He threw away his shield and sword, took the first boat sailing for Lesbos, and came home. What particularly horrified conventional people was that he was not in the least ashamed of what they were pleased to call his cowardice. On the contrary, he seemed proud of

it, and a letter he wrote to his friend Melanippus was widely quoted.

"Your Alcæus is safe, as you will see by this," he wrote, "he has escaped Ares, the God of war, on the battle-field, and he has fled to his native land, leaving behind his sword and his shield. His unconquerable shield, in fact, the Athenians have hung up before the Goddess of the Blue Eyes."

Sappho was bitterly disappointed the first time Alcæus was pointed out to her in the market-place. She had known that he was a drinker and that his face might show the effects of a riotous and roaming life, but she had not expected a poet of his talents to look heavy and rather crude.

Alcæus was standing in a group of men, his feet wide apart; his long black beard, which was not well cut, waved slightly in the breeze as he talked. His gestures were curiously angular, but Sappho had to admit to herself that he emanated strength and determination. The lower part of his face, however, was unrestrained and sensuous, and it was not until she glanced at his high, smooth forehead, and his large, intelligent eyes that she was aware of a sensitiveness which was undoubtedly a part of him.

He was attacking Pittacus. Alcæus said that this uneducated man would be a cruder tyrant than Melanchros. Alcæus spoke with great self-possession; he seemed sure that no one would contradict him, that his listeners entirely agreed with him, that

they, too, were more concerned with a man's culture, his freedom from moral prejudice, his traditions of civilisation, than with his ability as a ruler.

"You know what I think of the nobles," Alcæus was saying, and his little audience well remembered what contempt the aristocrats had felt for him, how they called him a renegade, since he betrayed their military ideals; "but at least we have tradition; we aristocrats may be knaves and fools, but we are not uneducated fools. Like Pittacus."

Sappho turned abruptly from Alcæus' group; she suddenly realised that she had been staring at him. Often, when she was absorbed by her own thoughts, she gazed rudely at people. It was a bad habit, and one she was trying to overcome. Now, when she had moved away quickly, she found that she was facing the perfume-seller's booth. The old woman was nodding and smiling at her, and Sappho was more thoughtful than usual as she slowly raised one flask after another to her nose.

The scent-seller did not speak. Sappho was a good customer and one who should be allowed to choose carefully. Besides, the old woman was conscious of beauty, and she was sure she had never seen more beautiful hands than this young woman's.

Sappho was thinking about Alcæus and about the great world beyond Lesbos, which he had seen. And she thought about the freedom of his mind, the life he led—a life so different from her narrow existence

at her uncle's house. She sighed. He would not understand her interest in him. Undoubtedly, if he was attracted by a woman, he was not the kind of man who would want or be satisfied with mere friendship from her.

Alcæus happened at this moment to turn in her direction; but, obviously, he did not see her. People, especially young men, did not as a rule take any notice of her when they first met her. But she must have arrested the attention of many afterwards, for she had often been puzzled by their suddenly awakened interest in her later. There was nothing striking about her appearance, as she knew, for she frequently studied her face in her mirror, except that she was always particularly well dressed and groomed. But there were many other well-dressed young women in Lesbos, and most of them were pretty or beautiful, which she certainly was not.

Of one thing, however, Sappho was quite certain as she walked slowly from the market-place: no one could possibly guess that, very frequently, her lack of beauty made her acutely shy and uncomfortable, that this gave her a feeling of inadequacy. She was sure that she successfully concealed her self-consciousness, that she was developing an effective mask which she presented to the world.

Some of the young women in Mitylene, in fact, thought that she was haughty, because she wrote poetry and knew so much more about history and

music and everything else than they did. And her elders, especially her Uncle Eurygyus, were often annoyed at what they considered her undue self-assurance. She held her head too high to suit them.

Alcæus, too, noticed the poise of this unknown girl walking away from the market-place that morning. The dignity and reserve expressed in her slim, fragile back were in such sharp contrast to the girl's obvious youth, to the smallness of her body, that he stopped talking for a moment and looked after her. And he asked an acquaintance of her uncle, who had stopped to speak to him, who she was.

Alcæus was told that she was Eurygyus' niece, an odd girl, who dabbled in poetry, never ran after men, and seemed very old for her age. And though Alcæus himself could not have said why he did so—there was certainly nothing really compelling about this slight figure disappearing in the distance—he resolved that, one day when he had nothing better to do, he would arrange to meet her and read her verse.

Afterwards, when Sappho and Alcæus were firm friends, she often told him that he had not been flattering to her the first time they saw each other. He had looked her full in the face without wanting to know her, and not until he had seen the back of her head had he felt the slightest curiosity to find out who she was.

A few days later someone had taken him to one of

Eurygyus' *symposia*, and it was then easy for Alcæus to come again to the house and see Sappho. For though Eurygyus never read poetry and thoroughly disapproved of restless young radicals like Alcæus, he was flattered to entertain this famous poet in his home.

When Eurygyus knew Alcæus better, and the older man's neighbours and friends began to criticise him for giving hospitality to this notorious revolutionary, as they called him, Eurygyus did not welcome Alcæus as warmly as he had done at first. There was enough discontent in Lesbos after the war, without encouraging its promoters, and Eurygyus was furious with the men of Alcæus' generation who stimulated this unrest instead of trying to calm down the uneducated section of the population. Eurygyus, like all good conservatives, always clung to the *status quo*, whatever this happened to be; he hated any change, he was frightened of the unknown, and he was suspicious of adventurous minds like that of Alcæus.

As a matter of fact, Eurygyus, who had no insight into the complex political issues of a changing age, completely misunderstood Alcæus' point of view. It is true that he was a man of passionate political convictions, a man willing to fight and make any sacrifice for his beliefs, but he had no wish to encourage the uneducated masses to revolt. He never wanted to stimulate social excesses such as those which had occurred a few decades before in Megara, when

Theagenes was tyrant there. Alcæus knew this period of history well from Theognis' poems.

For though Alcæus hated cruelty and oppression, he was cynical in the extreme about the new experiments in the rule of the people, the *demos*; he did not believe in democracy, and he had no faith whatsoever in the ability of the masses to govern themselves. On the contrary, he was convinced that they should be ruled firmly, though with justice, by an educated minority, by an oligarchy consisting chiefly of aristocrats.

The chief reason why many nobles, like Eurygyus, were afraid of Alcæus and his friends was that these young aristocrats had no objections to admitting a limited number of freemen into this select governing class, even though, in time, this system would inevitably break down the rigid class distinction between the freemen and the nobles.

Alcæus despised the false and utterly selfish values worshipped by many members of his own aristocratic class, and he violently objected to the moral support a large number of them gave Pittacus, whose excellent qualities he never appreciated and whom he always called an "upstart and a base-born fool."

Alcæus' hatred of Pittacus was based on the fear that he would one day rid himself of his aristocratic supporters and make himself the sole ruler of Mitylene. Then, so Alcæus was sure, he would become as ruthless, self-seeking and cruel as many of the other tyrants of the age.

Later, Pittacus did become the dictator of Mitylene, but the Greeks were right when they included him among their Seven Wise Men, and Alcæus' judgment of the man was wrong. Obviously, Alcæus had spent so many years on battle-fields that he had not yet developed political insight.

When Alcæus returned from the war he was carried away by his political fervour, which was, as yet, expressed largely in a negative emotion: his loathing of Pittacus. He was the stubborn young poet's obsession. He felt it was his duty to his country to make his compatriots turn against Pittacus as violently as he himself had done. He warned his fellow-Mitylenians against Pittacus in fiery terms. Several of these exhortations have been preserved.

"But he goes striding wide over your heads," one of them says, "and you hold your tongues like initiates when they behold the dead they have called up. Nay, rather, my fellow-countrymen, up and quench the log, while it but smoulders among you, lest the light thereof come to a brighter flame."

When Alcæus met Sappho for the first time, she was hoping that he would ask to see her verse, that he would talk to her about literature. She was longing to know what this respected critic, whose opinion she would trust, thought of her poetry. She herself was far too shy, and too closely attached to the poems she had written, to bring up the subject of her own work,

but she had got her tablets out so that he could read her verses if he asked for them.

It was therefore rather a shock to her when Alcæus plunged at once into a long political discussion, or rather monologue. Anyone hearing him pour forth his abuse of Pittacus, his hatred of tyrants in general, would never have suspected that already he was considered one of the most distinguished poets of the day. He seemed to be entirely absorbed by politics.

When, after several visits, Alcæus had read Sappho's verse, and had experienced that rare excitement of having discovered a real poet, when he knew that she was an unusual young woman, and he was eager to impress his views on her young and receptive mind, he continued to talk far more about politics than he did about literature. He felt that her talent, or her genius—and at times, though he did not say so, he was convinced that she had more than mere talent —could wait, there would be plenty of time to help her improve her verse. Now political issues were imminent. His desire to rid Mitylene of Pittacus obsessed his mind, and gradually Sappho, too, shared his passionate interest in the state of affairs in her city.

She realised soon enough that Alcæus was a difficult man. Hardly had she adjusted herself to talking more about politics than about literature, to listening patiently to his outbursts, to his plans and hopes and fears for Mitylene, when he suddenly ceased discussing the political situation.

He became shy and quiet; he wanted to know how she was feeling, what she was thinking, where she was going, whom she was seeing. And as Sappho had always thought of him impersonally, as a mouthpiece of ideas, as a mind, she had not watched him closely as a human being, and the abrupt change in his manner seemed to her to have come about almost from one day to the next.

Finally, she could not pretend to herself any longer that she did not realise what was wrong with him. Alcæus, who was run after and adored by many beautiful women, had taken it into his erratic head, or rather heart, to fall madly in love with her.

He made no secret of his passion, all of Mitylene knew about it, and she hated being discussed by strangers. ". . . Lesbian Alkaios," Athenæus, in his *Doctors at Dinner*, quotes Hermesinanx as saying, " thou knowest in how many a serenade he thrummed out his delightful love of Sappho; the poet loved that nightingale of hymns and vexed the man of Teos with his eloquence."

In the beginning, Alcæus' devotion made Sappho feel uncomfortable. Then, as his shyness increased, and his awkward gentleness became more urgent, she was moved despite herself. She was sorry for him, yet she hated this new pity, and in the end she grew impatient and annoyed.

Her friendship for him had been a great experience, and she bitterly resented this change in their relation-

ship. For the first time she had known real companionship with a brilliant human being; this had been her first contact with a mind which was a match for her own. Alcæus had given her the first mental stimulus she had ever known.

As the weeks passed, and she saw this companionship slipping from her to be replaced by an atmosphere of repressed emotion, she was unreasonable and angry. Besides, it irritated her profoundly to see this man, whose great charm was his self-assurance, and who usually reached out boldly for anything he wanted, being so unsure of himself in her presence. In the innocence of her youth, furthermore, she reproached him for being unable to control his emotions, for she expected him to understand without words that she would never care for him.

Apart from resenting the emotional situation which Alcæus was forcing upon her, Sappho was disturbed because he had upset the sophisticated system of emotional values which he himself had been impressing on her mind. Whenever he had troubled to discuss these things with her, he had made fun of love and praised casual sensual pleasures. She had known that he was sincere when he told her that love was an illusion, that it was foolish to hope for any permanent relationship, that a man is lucky who retains within himself the ability to be attracted again and again, who can pretend to himself again and again that he believes, for a short time, at least, in the illusion of

love. And now she realised intuitively that what he felt for her was not an illusion, that he himself had belied all he had said. And she resented the doubts which he thus roused within her.

Alcæus was conscious of her unspoken resentment, and he postponed telling her frankly that he loved her. The quality of his feeling for Sappho is shown in a fragment of the verse he finally decided to send instead of speaking to her.

> Violet weaving, chaste, sweet smiling Sappho,
> I would speak, but bashfulness restrains me.

Her answer had all the hardness of youth and of complete inexperience, and it also reflected the aversion she felt at the mere thought that a strong, healthy man like Alcæus might ever make love to her.

When she was older and had been unhappy herself, she often wondered how she could have been insensitive and crude enough to write to Alcæus as she did. Her regrets, however, never prompted her to destroy her verse to him, for she thought it good. A fragment of it has been preserved.

> Had'st thou wished for things good or noble [she wrote cruelly] and had not thy tongue formed evil speech, shame would not have shown from thine eyes, but thou had'st spoken frankly about it.

Alcæus did not come to see her for several weeks after he had this answer. He was struggling to overcome his passion for her. He had always been a

complete cynic about love, and he tried to rationalise his love for Sappho, telling himself that she was not beautiful, that she was not physically as attractive as other women, that there was a cruel streak in her, or she could not have written to him as she had, that there were plenty of men with whom he could discuss his political interests, that he, therefore, did not need her companionship, and that it was ridiculous that she should have captured his imagination.

In rare moments of honesty with himself, however, Alcæus realised that, whenever she spoke, he forgot that she was not beautiful, for her voice was more attractive to him than all the perfect features of all the beautiful women he had ever known; he knew that, as long as he lived, he would never forget her voice when she was moved or excited or happy. He could not keep away from her indefinitely, and one day he suddenly appeared again at Eurygyus' house. His manner was casual, he did not mention his letter to her, nor her answer, and at first she thought that he was going to be sensible. But then some trivial gesture she made suddenly moved him profoundly and he blurted out how much he loved her.

Sappho sat very still before him. She disliked any display of emotions in public, and the fact that she did not return Alcæus' feelings made him seem shockingly unreserved, for only had she responded to him would his love have been any concern of hers. And she hated pitying this healthy and well-adjusted

man; it seemed out of place to feel sorry for him. And besides, young as she was, the fact was already dawning on her consciousness that pity is not in the least akin to love, but, on the contrary, very close to contempt. And she was determined that Alcæus was not to make a fool of himself or appear ridiculous to himself or her.

She spoke to him sharply, hoping that this would help him to pull himself together. And then she explained to him—and in the age in which they lived long explanations on this subject were not necessary—that men made no emotional appeal to her whatsoever. This much, she assured him, she knew beyond a doubt about herself and, as many of his own love-poems to his friend Melinappus were well known in Mitylene, she expected him to understand her.

Alcæus was not a man who took "no" easily. He pointed out to her how young and inexperienced she was, and begged her to marry him and give him a chance. Then, at least, though they might not make a success of a real marriage, she would be his constant companion.

Sappho shook her head. No, if she ever married—and for the first time such a possibility occurred to her—it would be to escape from her uncle's house, to have her freedom. And she would marry some passionless man, and never a vital, compelling person like Alcæus. She seemed very mature, very sure of herself as she spoke, and then her face suddenly changed

and looked like that of a rather helpless child. For a fleeting moment Alcæus saw her without her rigid reserve, without the mask of haughtiness she had always assumed even towards him, and she told him that he was her only friend, that he must not leave her.

Despite his unhappiness, Alcæus could not help smiling at her. Sappho was so old for her age in most things that, despite his misery, it amused him to see her display the frank self-centredness of youth. She had pushed her concern for him out of her mind, she was no longer worried about him, and she outpoured to him about her own troubles. She spoke more quickly than usual, more excitedly, as though she wanted to confide in him and yet was afraid of her own frankness.

She told him that sometimes she did not think she could stand it much longer: living in Eurygyus' house, following the dull routine of his conventional life, being forced, to a certain extent at least, to obey his orders, because he was her guardian, and without his consent she could not buy even a scroll. She had thought and thought, she said, of how she could get away. She admitted that she wanted to have a career as a poet, but she longed for a profession as well. Why should she not organise some of the great festivals to the Gods? Other women had done this in Lesbos.

Alcæus listened quietly, wondering how to tell her that Eurygyus would never allow his wealthy ward to

spend her money as she chose. Alcæus hesitated; this truth would have brought her face to face a little too harshly with the crude realities of life. And he wanted to protect her from just such truths. So, instead of talking to her sensibly, as she had hoped and expected, he again burst forth, saying that all that freedom would be hers if she married him.

Sappho, whose mood had changed, was not willing to revert to this painful subject. She was annoyed and no longer sympathetic, and they might have quarrelled seriously if, at this moment, Eurygyus had not lumbered across the courtyard and on to the portico.

He was not in a good humour, he had eaten too much for his *ariston*—his luncheon—and when he saw his niece in what was obviously an intimate conversation with Alcæus, his latent antagonism towards the young man became extremely lively and articulate.

Eurygyus' dislike of Alcæus had recently been stimulated by the remarks of one of his friends, a man with a marriageable son, who had chided Eurygyus for permitting his niece to spend quite so much of her time with an unmarriageable radical like Alcæus. This had annoyed Eurygyus very much, for he wanted Sappho to marry a rich man.

There was a scene—that is, if an enraged monologue by Eurygyus could be called a scene. Alcæus felt too much contempt for him to answer, but the ironical smile on his face was more effective than words. Sappho said nothing; she got up and calmly left the

portico. But as she walked quietly away, she smiled at Alcæus and mentioned that she would see him the next day in the market-place.

Sappho knew that the morning would inevitably bring an unpleasant meeting with her uncle. She got up early and instructed the slaves to dilute the breakfast wine with a great deal of water. Her uncle was easier to manage when he had not been drinking. She had not, however, expected Eurygyus to be quite as difficult as he was when he summoned her to his private apartments.

He told her that, as her guardian, he forbade her to see Alcæus and his unpatriotic friends, and she would do as she was told or he would cut off her allowance, and then where would she be without her fine scents and make-up? He should have put his foot down much sooner, he stormed; she had reached a marriageable age, and what young man would want to marry a blue-stocking, anyway?

Sappho did not answer. She never spoke when she was really angry. She waited patiently, suppressing her agitation, until he said: "This is my last word on the subject." Eurygyus always ended any discussions with this remark, but this time she felt uneasily that he meant it.

After he had left her, Sappho sat thinking for a long time. This was the first occasion on which her dull uncle had made her think. As a rule he stimulated impatience, but never mental processes, and,

troubled though she was, she stopped to consider this fact.

She had known for many months that the situation in Eurygyus' home was impossible; but, in common with many people whose fantasy is over-developed, she had always imagined a solution, hoping that something unexpected would occur to bring about a change. She was suddenly conscious that she had allowed herself to be optimistic, because she hated facing reality; she had postponed dealing with this reality because, heretofore, she had lacked the courage.

She knew that she would be stifled if she stayed much longer in Eurygyus' house; she would be isolated, cut off from her friends, her political interests, life as she loved to live it. She was also aware that the only way of escape from her uncle's influence was marriage. And she was sixteen, the marriageable age in ancient Greece.

Her conversation with Alcæus the day before had made her acutely aware of her innate aversion to marriage, but she realised that the time had come when she must decide which was the lesser of two evils: to remain with Eurygyus and allow her mind to be imprisoned indefinitely (for he was a healthy man who might live for many years), or to marry and go through what, to her, was a fearsome and unnatural thing. "If only," Sappho thought, longing for her mother, "if only Cleïs were here so that I could discuss all this with her."

Sappho's problem obsessed her for many weary hours of many days. "I know not what to do: I have two minds," she wrote later. In the end her desire for freedom was the strongest urge within her. Naturally, she had already been reviewing in her mind the gentle youths she knew who might be willing to marry her. She would not have considered forceful men like Alcæus; from her point of view, that sacrifice would have been too great.

She finally decided that a young merchant, Cercolas, from Andros, an island between Lesbos and Corinth, might do. Sappho had known Cercolas for some time. He was one of the young men who frequently seemed to appear, as though by chance, and join her in the market-place and elsewhere in the town, when she was out.

Cercolas was a sensitive man, a rather frail creature who was lonely in Lesbos. He occasionally came to her for advice as he would have gone to his mother. Sappho, in turn, had a genuine affection for him; she respected his personal integrity, and she trusted him sufficiently to feel that she could be entirely honest with him and tell him why she had decided that she must marry.

She was sure that the idea of marrying her or anyone else had never occurred to Cercolas. Apart from herself and one or two kind, motherly matrons in Lesbos, he knew no women, and it was clear to his friends that he preferred the company of men. She resolved,

a few weeks after her disagreeable talk with Eurygyus, to see Cercolas and to be quite frank with him. She sent Phœbe to his house with a message asking him to come.

When he came, she did not stop for circumlocutions. She went straight to the point. She spoke rather quickly, but gave no other sign of the embarrassment and agitation she was feeling.

Cercolas listened to her quietly. He had what is so frequently called a feminine intuition about people; he understood Sappho, and he was less astonished by her suggestion than she would have expected. She did not know that he considered her so marvellous as to be almost superhuman, and nothing she did or said or asked could, therefore, surprise him.

She glanced up at him once while she was speaking, and saw him sitting before her deep in thought, his tall, thin figure bending forward in his chair, his eyes gazing at the floor, his high forehead slightly wrinkled. His long, slender hands—such frightened hands, she suddenly thought, and so delicate that they might have been a woman's—lay folded together on his knees.

He had felt isolated and very much alone in Lesbos. At home, in Andros, he had been his mother's and sisters' constant companion, and here, in a foreign country, life seemed cold, unbearable almost, without the gentleness and the affection of women. The young men and boys with whom he spent his evenings had helped him to pass the time, helped him to forget

his loneliness for a passing hour, but none of them had really meant anything to him. Nor was he physically strong enough to take an active part in their sports and games, and this emphasised his feeling of being an outsider in Mitylene.

Cercolas had more insight into the problems of others than into his own, and he never realised that he was, by nature, a man who would always be an outsider, always be alone in whatever environment he happened to be placed. It was not in him to conform easily to his surroundings. He moved along through life according to his own individual rhythm, rarely overcoming his innate passivity to the extent of trying to make friends with anyone.

Cercolas' solitude was not, however, entirely due to his own nature. Few people had considered it worth while to break through his reserve. Men did not make an effort to know him better, as he seemed to them effeminate, and most women found him dull. He, in turn, felt at ease only with very masculine women, and as, on the surface, Sappho appeared to be so essentially feminine, he had sometimes vaguely wondered why he preferred her companionship to that of any woman he had ever met. Later, when he knew her better, and his knowledge of his own character, too, had become more profound, he understood the compelling attraction she had always had for him.

Now, as he sat listening to her, he longed to tell her how much she had meant to him, what a sense of

security her very presence gave him, how she banished his fears and doubts and his loneliness. But he had never been able to express his emotions in words, and when he spoke, the slight stammer, which had been his greatest affliction since his childhood, overcame him, and he stopped for a moment, breathless. His small mouth twitched; Sappho looked away, and then, taking two or three deep breaths, Cercolas told her in a quiet voice that he would accept her suggestion, and marry her, on any conditions. She laid her hand for a moment on his fingers and said nothing.

In a little while he spoke again, this time more firmly. And the thought passed through her mind, how strange it was that this youth, who had been a complete stranger to her such a few minutes before, should now be telling her his most cherished and secret wishes. The one thing, he said, that he had always wanted more than anything in the world was a child, a child of his own.

He looked at Sappho shyly as he spoke, suddenly realising his own inconsistency, for he had just declared that he would marry her on any conditions. There was an expression on her face which made him regret that he had spoken. No, no, he added quickly, if the thought was unbearable to her, she was to forget what he had said. He would never mention this again, he promised her.

Sappho could feel her face flushing; she was glad that she had put on her rouge so carefully before

Cercolas came. She refused to allow herself to think of what he had said, but already she knew that she would never accept from him her freedom, this escape from Eurygyus, without giving in return, even if this meant some unhappiness for her.

When she spoke again, she was quite calm, objectively discussing the date of their marriage and the formal arrangements. Then Cercolas rose rather stiffly and left her. He walked hesitatingly, almost like a blind man, and this made her feel protective towards him.

Sappho married Cercolas, and went through the intricate marriage ceremony with rather a set smile on her lips. She seemed to her uncle's friends to be too aloof from the general rejoicings. A bride, they thought, should be shy, but she should show her eagerness. They did not know that Sappho was more frightened than she had ever been in her life before. She submitted to her bath in the water from the sacred well, to being dressed in splendid clothes; but when she sat beside Cercolas in the chariot which was to take them to his house, she broke down and wept and hated herself for her weakness.

The most painful part of the ceremony was yet to come.

> The bridegroom [as Arthur Weigall writes] was now conducted to the room by his merry friends and relatives, who slapped him on the back and urged him forward. Having entered the room, he locked the door, and his first business was to unveil the bride and to eat a quince with her as a pledge of future sweetness of speech. Meanwhile the

company outside banged and kicked the door, and shouted jokes and encouraging suggestions through the cracks; while the bridesmaids sang one of those songs so often composed by Sappho, and beat time to it by stamping their feet and clapping their hands. To the accompaniment of this din the marriage was consummated; and it was only when the bridegroom came to the door and announced that all was as it should be that the people outside took their departure, though the bridesmaids grouped themselves near by and continued to sing for the greater part of the night. Next morning the newly married couple received the congratulations of their friends; but that night the bridegroom slept at the house of the bride's father, so as to give her the opportunity of quiet sleep, and it was only on the third day that he returned to her, another dinner-party being given that evening.

When Sappho was older and more experienced, she appreciated that this part of the marriage ceremony was not painful to other women as it had been to her. Nor is it generally considered bad taste in our own day to throw rice after a motor-car conveying a bride and groom to their new home. Had the custom of her age offended Sappho permanently, she could not, as a mature poet, have composed the exquisite wedding poems she later wrote.

Even on the day of her marriage she did not allow herself to succumb again to her nervousness. She had made her choice, and she must stick by it: whatever else lay before her, she was going to a life of her own, where she could think her own thoughts in peace and do as she liked. She was free.

She had been sure that Cercolas was sensitive, but she had not known the depth of his unselfish con-

sideration. And she was glad, therefore, that, in turn, she had not disappointed him.

Very soon after her wedding she realised that she was going to have a child. She was amazed at the fierce tenderness with which she looked forward to its coming. She never contemplated the possibility that this child might be a son; her longing for a daughter was greater than any fear that her wish might not be fulfilled.

When the infant was born, Sappho was passionately attached to it.

In some strange way, the helpless little thing, with fluttering hands, huge black eyes and a tiny mouth, compensated her for the loss of her mother. Sappho could not understand why this was so, why, for the first time, she missed Cleïs less poignantly, for this child was no safe harbour with whom she would feel the security Cleïs had given her. On the contrary, the infant would rest in her. Perhaps, Sappho decided, this daughter comforted her because she, too, as Cleïs had been, was a permanent tie, a lasting reality in life. Everyone else she knew and loved might drift out of her life, but only death could separate her from this child.

Sappho named her daughter Cleïs after her mother.

> I have the fairest daughter with a form like a golden flower [Sappho wrote when the girl was a little older], Cleïs, the most dearly beloved, whom I cherish more than all of Lydia and lovely Lesbos.

CHAPTER FOUR

FOR the first time since her mother's death Sappho was really happy. She had the child, whom she adored, she was young, she was free, life lay before her. Sometimes, feeling a vague discontent, she wished that she herself, like her men friends, could be satisfied with casual relationships. But she found that no beauty in a woman compensated for a lack of brains, of understanding. And so few women combined beauty and intellect.

Sappho had once tried to forgo the intellectual companionship for which she longed. The girl, whose name was Lydia, had undoubtedly been beautiful, but before the first day of her visit in Sappho's home was over, she wondered why on earth she had asked this silly woman to come and stay there even for a week. Only Phœbe, however, realised how bored her mistress was, and Phœbe was always discreet.

Occasionally Sappho was made to feel uncomfortable by the attention women persisted in showing her. There was, for instance, her brother Charaxus' mistress, a dull creature, who fell in love with Sappho, and lacked the judgment and the good taste to conceal this fact from her jealous lover. Sappho had never been fond of this brother, she had never forgotten his cruelty towards her as a child, and she resented the fact that this trivial woman should have brought down upon her his open animosity.

These were unimportant annoyances, however, and life as a whole was exciting and interesting. Cercolas never interfered with anything she did, with any of her friendships. He therefore surprised her one day when he quietly pointed out that her close association with Alcæus and his group of rebellious aristocrats might compromise her politically, and cause her harm.

Cercolas emphasised that he was not urging her to give up her political interests. All he wanted—and for the only time in their married life she felt conscious of the fact that he was ten years older and more experienced than she was herself—was that she should see the situation clearly, and appreciate the risk she was taking when she involved herself with Alcæus' revolt against Pittacus.

Her friendship with Alcæus had continued unbroken. Fortunately for himself, he had been absorbed by his plans to overthrow Pittacus, to organise his small party of rebels, and he had little time or leisure in which to brood unduly over Sappho's refusal. Besides, the one sphere in which he dominated her was politics, and this gave him a sense of domination. She had so despised Eurygyus' attitude of passive acquiescence towards any ruler who happened to be in power, that she had become a rebel on principle, and, as she was young, she tended blindly to follow Alcæus' lead.

Any political policy which broke away from the negative views she had always heard discussed in her uncle's house seemed to her to mean liberty, emanci-

pation, progress, a new era for the State. It excited and interested her, furthermore, to be one of Alcæus' followers, to belong to a political party, to be accepted as an equal by Alcæus, his brothers and his friends in a group where sex did not matter and where people forgot that she was a woman.

The changing political scene fascinated her. Immediately after the war against Athens, several parties, with potential tyrants at their head, tried, by force, to gain control of Mitylene. Megelagryos, a particularly ruthless, self-centred man, had been victorious for a short time, but he was overthrown by another tyrant named Myrsilos. It was rumoured among Pittacus' friends, and stated as a fact by Alcæus and Pittacus' other enemies, that he had agreed to support Myrsilos, if the new dictator, in turn, when he came into power, would strengthen Pittacus' party.

Soon Alcæus' predictions had been realised, and Pittacus broke away from the aristocratic party which had originally supported him and had made him Dictator during the war. It was quite obvious that Pittacus had no intention of allowing Myrsilos to remain in control for long, and that if he was not interfering with the régime, it was merely because he was waiting to build up his own following.

Pittacus was sure that a man as tyrannical as Myrsilos would soon create violent dissatisfaction among the population of Mitylene, and when this

discontent had reached its height, he intended to step in and appoint himself as the ruler of the city. Pittacus' motives were, however, never selfish: he cared little for personal power, he was a patriot in the best sense of the word.

Alcæus was aware of Pittacus' intentions, but he completely misinterpreted the older man's motives. Alcæus, whose stubbornness was increasing, could not, and would not, see that Pittacus was a man who loved his country more than his own personal career, and who was not prompted by selfish ambition. Pittacus was, in fact, though he was now almost sixty, as simple and unassuming as he had been before he gained so much influence. He believed, as he had taught his followers years before, that a man should cultivate "truth, good faith, experience, brains, good comradeship and hard work," and that if they did so they could not go far wrong.

Pittacus' doctrines seemed very old-fashioned to Alcæus and his friends, who tried feverishly to strengthen their own little party so that they could successfully oppose Pittacus. It was not difficult for Alcæus to rouse indignation against him amongst the younger people of Mitylene. For Pittacus was a puritan. He had, for instance, passed a law making any offence twice as serious, the punishment twice as severe, if the criminal was drunk at the time when the crime was committed. In common with many young and inexperienced men and women in all generations, Alcæus

and his friends mistook puritanical morality for political and social reaction.

Pittacus was informed by his agents that Alcæus' group of rebels were plotting against him, but he did not arrest them at once, because he liked these fiery young people and hoped one day to win their friendship and support. He had read Alcæus' poetry, and he wanted to keep this talented young man in Mitylene.

At first, furthermore, Pittacus did not take Alcæus very seriously; he considered him a rather bad-tempered, discontented writer, but not a conspirator who was worth bothering about. He never thought that Alcæus really wanted to kill him, for he was one of those trusting men who find it difficult to believe that anyone would seriously contemplate murder.

His advisers, however, did not treat the activities of Alcæus and his followers quite as lightly. They warned Pittacus again and again to be careful. His agents continuously reported that this group of impetuous aristocrats were making plans to assassinate him, and that, in any case, they were gradually undermining public confidence in him among the nobility. When his personal safety was mentioned, Pittacus merely smiled a tolerant smile; but when his friends told him that the State, Mitylene, to which he had always devoted the great passion of his life, was threatened by these young people, he finally decided that he must act.

Alcæus had made the mistake common to many

young politicians: he had under-estimated the astuteness of his adversary, his ability to act quickly when the occasion arose. Alcæus was therefore as surprised as he was shocked when he and his associates were unexpectedly arrested one night at a secret meeting. He had not known how carefully he had been watched by Pittacus' spies.

Sappho was with Alcæus and his friends that night when they were taken into custody. For her these mysterious gatherings had been a thrilling adventure; it was romantic to meet a group of friends in the stillness of the night. She had never considered the serious consequences these meetings might entail. She had thought Cercolas over-careful, over-solicitous for her welfare, when he warned her. Now she realised, with deep regret, that she would make him anxious, and she hated hurting him.

Sappho always remembered the echoing of their footsteps as they walked through the silent town, escorted by the armed guards. Alcæus, his brothers, the small band of followers; the impotent rage reflected on Alcæus' face; the guards walking in front and behind them. She was sure that exile, at least, would be their punishment, and as she followed the others she knew real terror as she thought of Cleïs. Would they make her leave her child if she herself was banished?

Sappho stumbled over her long skirt, which, as a rule, she held up with consummate grace, and Antimenidas, Alcæus' brother, who was walking beside her,

took her arm to support her. As he did so, he glanced at her face. In her fear she had rubbed the back of her hand carelessly against her cheek, so that the rouge was streaked. Antimenidas had met her daily for many, many months, and it was the only time he had ever seen her meticulous make-up disturbed.

Antimenidas did not realise that Sappho was growing up in those few minutes as they moved along through the silent streets. Life had seemed to her much simpler than this. She had enjoyed the danger involved in going to the secret meetings, but she had not consciously connected this excitement with her own life, with the possibility that she might be parted from Cleïs, or exiled from Mitylene, the home which she so passionately loved.

Their arrest was to jolt her intellectually as well. She was suddenly amazed at her own childishness, at her implicit faith in Alcæus' belief that their tiny party could one day be victorious. She had been carried away completely by his buoyant optimism; she had not thought things out for herself. She realised with a start that she had not, after all, made herself free when she left Eurygyus' house: she had merely emancipated herself from his particular world. She would not be really free until her mind was independent.

Only now was she free—now, at this moment, when she had learned that she must depend upon herself

alone, and upon her own judgment. If, after weighing Alcæus' ideas more carefully, she still agreed with him, she would go on. Otherwise she would not, and this would require courage, because he and his friends might say that she had deserted them in a crisis.

She did not sleep that night which they spent in the guardhouse, but she thought a great deal. At the trial the next morning they were sentenced to exile in Pyrrha, but Sappho was less frightened than she had been the night before. Cercolas had sent Phœbe to tell her that, as soon as he had heard about the arrest, he had made all arrangements to go with her to Pyrrha. Naturally they were taking the child with them. Cleïs had been dressed for the journey, and he himself was ready. It had never occurred to him not to join her, and as they so rarely spoke of their great friendship for each other, Cercolas may never have known how deeply his devotion at this time moved her.

Pyrrha was only fifteen miles from Mitylene, but it was eminently suited as a place of exile. The town was on a steep hill, with only one well-guarded road down to the valley and to the rest of the island, and on a deep, lake-like inlet with only a narrow outlet to the sea.

Pittacus was, of course, aware that one or two daring individuals amongst Alcæus' followers might try, though probably in vain, to return to Mitylene, but as a group, the little party of conspirators would be

too carefully watched by his agents in Pyrrha to return until he wished them to do so.

Sappho soon adjusted herself to life in Pyrrha. She missed Mitylene. She had not known until her arrest quite how deeply she was attached to her home, but she did not allow her nostalgia to get the better of her. She had her writing and her child and Cercolas' companionship in Pyrrha, and she was not really unhappy.

Alcæus was far more miserable. His brothers, who faced the fact that their rebellion had failed miserably, decided to see the world while they were debarred from living at home. According to Strabo, they escaped from Pittacus' agents, took ship at the harbour of Pyrrha and travelled as far as Egypt and Thrace. Antimeridas, in fact, travelled as far as Babylon, where later, in 587 B.C., he joined Nebuchadnezzar's army in the conquest of Jerusalem.

Alcæus had refused to go with his brothers. He was too stubborn to admit defeat, and, like many *émigrés* of all ages and from all countries, he spent his days and nights in a squirrel-cage of theoretical intrigues, debating with his friends what he should do when he returned to Mitylene, how he would overthrow Pittacus at last.

He tried several times to quarrel with Sappho when she reproached him for his futile and childish rage, his waste of energy on negative emotions, such as his hatred of Pittacus. Alcæus was like so many refugees

in our time, who sit about in cafés talking interminably about the past and about an Utopian future, instead of trying to build up for themselves a new life in their country of exile.

Sappho objected to Alcæus' attacks against Pittacus' private life. She considered these spiteful and personal remarks unworthy of her old friend; it was contemptible, in a political quarrel, to bring in personal affairs. One of Alcæus' verses about Pittacus' wife was typical of his bitter mood. Pittacus had recently married an aristocrat, a woman no longer young, whose life had been adventurous, and Alcæus said of her that "she had been hammered hard and polished smooth by her former lovers as an old ship's bottom was by carpenters."

Alcæus spent many hours down at the harbour, hoping to meet sailors or travellers who had come from Mitylene. He avidly listened to any news of political developments in his home. He followed Pittacus' career as closely as he could at this distance. Though Pittacus had been the virtual Dictator for some time, he became the official tyrant of Mitylene after Myrsilos, whose oppressive rule had become intolerable, had been murdered. Pittacus did not, however, simply take over the government of the city: he turned to the citizens of Mitylene, and by their vote they appointed him as Dictator for ten years.

When Sappho heard of this election, she was impressed. She began to revise her opinion of Pittacus,

to wonder whether they had been wrong in their harsh judgment of the man. Alcæus, on the other hand, refused to change his views. "Are you so weak that you must be stubborn?" Sappho once asked him. He turned away from her in anger, and he was enraged when one of Pittacus' first official acts was to order the exiles in Pyrrha to return and to send them his forgiveness.

Sappho was happy; she sang and laughed as she packed her belongings and closed her house in Pyrrha. She was particularly glad to be going home, as Cercolas had not been well, he had troublesome attacks of coughing, he was restless and as near being irritable as a man of his gentle disposition could possibly be. It would do him good, she was sure, to settle down again in his own house, and to resume his former habits of life.

Alcæus was less pleased by Pittacus' pardon, for he longed, as he could not be a successful rebel, at least to become a martyr for his cause, and Pittacus' gracious message was already robbing him of his martyrdom. Besides, he realised that Sappho was disappointed in him, he felt her unspoken disapproval and, though he was too proud to admit how much he cared for her esteem, her decreasing respect for him hurt as much as it angered him.

It was not, therefore, a very happy party that set forth on the return journey to Mitylene. Cercolas felt unwell, his head ached, and he was not even

interested in little Cleïs' excited mumblings. Alcæus was sullen, glaring occasionally at Sappho, when they stopped to rest on the way. He did not speak to her or his followers, and he resented their obvious delight at the thought that they were going home.

Sappho wondered anxiously what Alcæus would do when they reached Mitylene. He had shown himself to be such a gallant and courageous fighter that she could not yet believe he would be such a poor loser. For it was clear that he had lost his struggle with Pittacus. All the reports they had received at Pyrrha indicated that, after years of social unrest, of sporadic riots and continuous discontent, Pittacus was bringing about an orderly state of affairs. For the first time in decades, the population of Mitylene was contented and at peace. No one wanted a change of government.

In a very few weeks after their return to Mitylene, she reluctantly admitted to herself that her worst fears about Alcæus were to be realised. He was making a fool of himself in his futile efforts to undermine Pittacus' authority now that the ruler's position was unassailable. Alcæus continued to hold secret meetings with his small group of fanatic followers, though it was clear to everyone that he was being carefully watched.

Alcæus' vain attempts to harm Pittacus made many people laugh, but Sappho was grieved to see her old friend forgetting that he had a mind and becoming so emotional. And it made her distinctly uncomfort-

able to see him foolishly pitting his strength against an insurmountable obstacle. Her friendship for Alcæus had always meant a great deal to her, and she resented the fact that he himself was causing her to lose her respect for him.

Despite the fact, however, that Sappho was thoroughly disillusioned about Alcæus, she did not avoid him. On the contrary, for the sake of their former friendship, she went to see him often, trying in vain to make him judge the situation more sanely and more clearly.

Sappho wanted to discuss Alcæus' activities with Cercolas. In his quiet voice he had frequently given her sound advice, and he had been right about Alcæus before they went to Pyrrha. But Cercolas was very ill, he was rarely well enough to go to a *symposium*, and he was out of touch with political developments in the city. The friends who came to see him told him what was happening, but he was curiously apathetic. Sappho was not sure whether he knew about Alcæus' plotting or not, and she resolved to say nothing about it.

One evening, however, Cercolas brought up the subject of his own accord. He spoke more firmly than he had done of late, she noticed, though his face was unnaturally flushed, and he was short of breath. He had known all along, he told her, that Alcæus was being an ass, but his stubbornness was now getting beyond a joke.

Sappho looked up in surprise: she had never heard him talk like that about anyone, and, for the first time, she wondered whether Cercolas had been jealous of Alcæus, whether her husband had regretted his bargain with her—whether, indeed, he was in love with her and, therefore, a far more gallant man than she had ever guessed. It was one of those things she would never know, for she could not now, when he was seriously ill, let him feel her doubts. If he had made this sacrifice, if he remained her friend when he wanted to be her lover, he must be allowed to carry it through, to keep his secret to the end.

Her voice sounded particularly cool and detached when she spoke: Cercolas could not possibly have guessed what she was thinking. And he, too, was calm when he emphasised the danger to which she would expose herself if she continued to see much of Alcæus. A friend of Cercolas, who knew Pittacus well, had told him that afternoon that, much as the Dictator disliked taking such a step, it would probably be necessary to exile Alcæus a second time. If Sappho met him too often, Cercolas reminded her, the police would undoubtedly believe that she was again involved in his conspiracies, and it would place her in a very compromising position.

Cercolas, who had never before interfered with anything she did, begged her, for Cleïs' sake, to give up seeing Alcæus. What Cercolas did not say, but what she knew he was thinking, was that he might not

live very much longer to act as their official protector in a crisis or a second exile. And he wanted to die in peace.

Sappho walked thoughtfully up and down the portico, and Cercolas was sure that he had made an impression on her. She promised that she would send a messenger to Alcæus explaining to him why she could not see him again. She would not send Phœbe, but another slave, so that her message would be more impersonal.

That night Alcæus was arrested. He was brought before Pittacus, who talked to him more like a father than a relentless judge. "Forgiveness is better than punishment," was one of Pittacus' slogans, and he applied it in Alcæus' case. But the younger man refused to listen; he stormed and raged, hurling insulting remarks at the Dictator. Pittacus had no choice but to exile him, but before Alcæus could be deported, he escaped from prison, with the help of some friends, and fled to the kingdom of Lydia.

Sappho heard this news as through a haze, for Cercolas was dying, and her sadness overwhelmed her. She was losing the most faithful friend she had ever had, the man who had taught her that character, human virtues, are more important than intellectual attainments.

After Cercolas' death, Sappho's house was strangely hushed. Dressed in white, as was the custom, his body lay in state for two days before the burial, but

Sappho refused to employ any of the professional mourning-women whose wails usually re-echoed through a house after a member of a family had died. Cercolas had lived such a quiet, unobtrusive life that Sappho was amazed at the number of sincere mourners who came to pay him their last respect. Men came, and women, to whom he had shown some kindness, some understanding, people whom Sappho had never seen before.

Cercolas had died by the time Alcæus returned to Mitylene on his last wild escapade. In Lydia he had armed two or three vessels, collected a small following, and then he returned to Lesbos in the summer to "invade" Mitylene. This pathetic gesture of revolt was easily defeated by Pittacus' soldiers, who took many prisoners. Alcæus was not amongst them, and Pittacus' men spent the night searching for him. Finally Sappho's elder brother, Charaxus, who had never ceased to be jealous of her, suggested that they go to her house. Sappho never forgave him for this treachery.

They discovered Alcæus in her home. In his despair, he had come to her for shelter, pointing out—what was quite true—that no one would think of looking for him there. Everyone in the town knew that he and she were no longer friends. Even had there been a risk that he would be found with her, however, she could not and would not have refused to

hide him. If she wanted to be accepted by men like Alcæus as their equal, she had decided long ago, she must be their equal in loyalty, she must do for Alcæus what a man who had once been his friend would have done.

Sappho was arrested with Alcæus, and the fact that he had been discovered hiding in her house was too compromising for her to be ignored by the authorities. When he was sentenced to exile, she, too, was banished, and this time they were to be deported from the island. Pittacus ordered her to go to Sicily. She dreaded the long sea journey with her small child, but she squared her slender shoulders and made her preparations. There was something ironical in being sent into exile because of a man who was no longer her friend. Had she and Alcæus still been fond of each other, there would, at least, have been a glamour of sacrifice in this banishment. As it was, Alcæus had ceased to exist for her; she never saw him again. But, as she packed her belongings, she wondered sadly whether any human relationships are lasting, whether there would ever be a permanent human basis in her life. Death had taken Cercolas from her, and bitter disappointment had destroyed her friendship for Alcæus. She held her child very close as she explained to her that they were going on a journey.

CHAPTER FIVE

HAD it not been for the fact that, by temperament, Sappho hated being forced to do anything, that she liked always to exert her own free will, and that, above all, she was anxious about taking Cleïs on so long a journey, she might well have looked forward to this expedition to Sicily. Sappho was only twenty-one, her desire for adventure was at its height, and her intellectual curiosity seemed to grow more insatiable with the years.

In common with most of her compatriots in other parts of the Greek Empire, she longed to see foreign countries. With the exception of the Spartans, almost all Greeks were passionate travellers, and the ancient world was as little surprised to see a Greek vessel in some out-of-the-way harbour as we are to-day when we find an Englishwoman, with low, efficient heels on her stout boots, improving the living conditions of the inhabitants on some remote island.

There was nothing static about the Greek Empire. It was a living, growing organism. Greek ships were always on the high seas, Greek citizens in various parts of the Empire were in constant touch with one another. Quite apart from the merchants, who travelled regularly with their goods, one met sculptors on board these ships, who had been summoned from their homes to erect a monument for some other city, architects who were going abroad to build a temple,

scholars in search of knowledge, philosophers eager to exchange ideas with their learned compatriots in distant places.

Besides, as in all ages and on all seas, one encountered on Greek vessels men who were travelling purely for the love of adventure, and others who had left their homes because they had committed some crime, like the wanderer " from a far land " mentioned in the *Odyssey* who " was fleeing from Argos because he had slain a man. . . ."

As Greece and the Greek islands were mountainous, everyone who could possibly afford to do so travelled by sea. People of wealth used the land route only for short distances.

Sappho was informed that arrangements had been made for her, Cleïs and Phœbe to embark on a given date from Mitylene. As she was officially under arrest until she left Lesbos, and Pittacus had to remember that, as far as she was concerned, he must, for political reasons, play the rôle of the stern, disapproving dictator, he could not send for her, or see her, before her departure. But he regretted the unfortunate circumstances which had compelled him to banish her, and he was determined to make her journey as easy and comfortable as possible.

Pittacus knew that he could trust Sappho's discretion, that no one would know of his concern for her welfare, and one night he sent a confidential messenger to ask her whether there was anything she

needed, or whether she wanted to change his arrangements.

She decided that she would make the journey in two stages: the first by way of the Ægean Islands to the eastern port of Corinth; the second from the western port of Corinth up along the western coast of Greece, then across the Ionian Sea, and down the coast of Italy and Sicily as far as Syracuse. She preferred to sail in vessels that remained near the coasts as much as possible, as this seemed safer for the child. In case of shipwreck, there was then hope that they would be saved. She had been taught that Apollo and the other gods would protect writers and artists like herself, but she had decided long before that, actually, it was wiser to look after herself. As she grew older, her occupation with the gods was increasingly æsthetic, rather than religious, and she herself was aware of her own scepticism about their omnipotence at this critical moment of her life, before she left Lesbos.

One of the things she dreaded abroad was the restricted position of women in other parts of the Empire. Life with her Uncle Eurygyus had taught her to hate the condescending, "little-woman" attitude of mediocre men towards women who were in every way their superiors, and she knew that in cities such as Corinth or Syracuse, where so-called respectable women were confined to the *gynaikonitis*—the women's quarters—it would be difficult to persuade men to accept her as their intellectual or social equal.

She resented what she had heard about the new laws of Solon in Athens and of Periander in Corinth, which undermined such influence as women had attained. In his legislation Solon listed " the control of women " under the regulations for conduct to be applied to immature boys and slaves. He had made it illegal for women to have a dowry, which might have given them a certain measure of economic independence. When they married, they were allowed to take nothing but three changes of clothing to their husband's house, so that the family fortune, and thus the family influence, would remain entirely in the hands of their fathers and brothers.

Women, in most cities of the Greek Empire, were told to be satisfied with painting pretty vases and embroidering nice temple-clothes. The Athenian girls, for instance, spent most of their time weaving a peplos for the statue of Athene Parthenos at the return, every four years, of the Panathenaïa. In other words, the activities of women were restricted to the same three K's, *Kinder*, *Küche* and *Kirche*—children, kitchen and the church—so honoured by their sex in Prussia twenty-five centuries later.

Even as a very young girl, Sappho had always resented the fact that an extraordinary woman like Helen of Troy should have been given merely a golden spindle and a silver basket in which to keep her thread. And Sappho had no intention of accepting the restrictions generally imposed on women

in Corinth or Syracuse or wherever she went on her travels.

Luckily for herself, her manner was quiet, she never antagonised men by overbearing words or gestures, she was never unnecessarily aggressive, and she was sure that if, among the intelligent men she hoped to meet, she contributed enough in ideas and personality, they would, in the end, accept her, regardless of any laws promulgated against women by some dictator or other.

During the last few days before she left Mitylene she was far too busy to think about her future life in Syracuse. Phœbe interrupted her thoughts every few moments, asking what objects were to be packed and which were to be left behind. Though Phœbe and she never mentioned this frightening fact to each other, they both knew that they would be away from home for several years at least. Or perhaps for ever. Sappho could not bear the contemplation of this possibility, and she brushed it aside whenever it forced itself upon her mind.

Outwardly she was very gay when the day came for her to sail. She laughed as she approached the ship and helped Cleïs to walk up the gang-plank, but she was feeling so depressed and desolate that breathing was difficult. The afternoon was hot, and seemed uncannily quiet. There was no wind as she stepped on to the deck of the vessel, the deck which would be her home for many weeks, and looked across the

harbour at Mitylene. Phœbe's face was like a mask, she was controlling herself with an effort. The two old family slaves, bringing Sappho's many boxes on to the ship, were weeping silently, and soundless weeping always affected her far more than unrestrained sobbing.

The captain of the ship came forward courteously to meet her, and led her to a little square place astern which had been curtained off for her. She knew that Pittacus must have arranged this added comfort for her and the child, and with irrational sentimentality, a state of mind quite unusual for her, she wondered whether to be near a political enemy in one's own country was not, perhaps, better than to be ruled by a friendly despot anywhere else on earth.

Little Cleïs' shouts of delight interrupted her miserable thoughts, and she sharply checked the self-pity which threatened to take possession of her. She must be more severe with herself, she resolved, deciding not to wait on the open deck to see Mitylene disappearing in the distance. Besides, the quiet of the night, the utter calm of the sea, made her feel for a moment that life was stagnant, standing still, or at an end.

She retired at once behind the curtain enclosing the small space assigned to her on the deck, and lay down with the child beside her. Sappho was very tired. She thought before she went to sleep that she must be careful to be tidy on this journey, or Phœbe would grumble. Never before had Sappho shared a room with anyone, and much less such a confined space.

Sappho smiled at the thought of Phœbe's severity, and then the last thing she heard before she went to sleep was the shouts of commands and the slow, regular creaking of the oars as the three rows of oarsmen below began their rhythmic and arduous task.

In the morning, when she awoke, the vessel was out in the open sea. She dressed with care and went on deck. The calm surface of water, which had depressed her the evening before, had disappeared; white caps of waves whirled round the bow of the ship. A sharp wind had risen during the night and was pressing forcefully into the square, billowing sails, and the wind, blowing at her hair, gave her new hope. After all, life and the world lay before her, and she thanked the Gods for this wind.

"From my distress," she wrote, "let buffeting winds bear it and all cares away."

On board the ship one day quietly followed the other, and the only event which mattered was whether there was a wind or a calm. Sappho sank back into a state of peaceful passivity she had not known for years. Before she finally left Mitylene, she had been unable to think quietly, or to read or concentrate; her thoughts seemed to run away from her, and she could never catch them up.

She would sit down on the shady side of the deck, the cylindrical cases containing her parchments on her lap, and wonder about life and about herself. What was in store for her in Syracuse? Why had she never fallen

in love, except in her imagination? What would she do to earn her living when she had spent the money she had brought with her? How would Cleïs like her new home?—all these questions, to which she knew no answers, glided through her mind. And when she was not thinking, she read.

Alcman of Sardis in Lydia, who lived in Sparta, and wrote in the Dorian dialect, a man about twenty years older than she was herself, was at this time her favourite poet. The others—Arion, for instance—whose work she planned to re-read before she arrived in Corinth, where he still lived, interested her, but she did not feel any living response when she read his drinking-songs, his Dionysian dithyrambs.

Naturally she could not foretell that his satyr songs, sung by various choruses, were one day to be regarded as the forerunners of the drama, but she appreciated them as a new form of art. Arion's work as a whole appealed to her mind rather than to her heart.

Arion did not inspire her as Alcman did. He, like herself, was a subjective poet: he was the first to write of purely personal emotions, of love and of longing. And though she had heard that he was rather a fat, crude man, his personality appealed to her imagination, for he was born as a slave and had been given his freedom from Agesidas, his master, because of his great talent. And Sappho admired any man who had been born in subjection and who, because of his own ability, had liberated himself.

"It is not Aphrodite," he wrote, for instance—and Sappho loved this poem—"but wild Love, like a child, plays touch-me-not-with-your-little-reed, treading softly on tiptoe."

Sappho had sympathy for Alcman's verse, sympathy in the literal Greek sense of feeling with him, and as a young woman she was influenced by him in so far as she caught his mood, as the atmosphere in some of his poems is reflected in her own. Again and again, on the ship sailing for Corinth, she read his poem about sleep, although she knew it by heart:

> Asleep lie mountain-top and mountain-gully
> Shoulder also and ravine;
> The creeping-things that come from the dark earth,
> The beasts whose lying is upon the hillside,
> The generation of bees,
> The monsters in the depths of the purple brine,
> All lie asleep, and with them the tribes of the winged birds.

Sappho enjoyed Alcman's humorous realism about the events of everyday life. He was not always up in the clouds, floating in an imaginary atmosphere of sentiment and love. Fragments of two of his poems, written in this ordinary human mood have been preserved:

> And then I'll give you a fine great caldron wherein you may gather a plentiful dinner. But unfired is it yet, though soon to be full of that good pottage the all-devouring Alcman loves piping hot when the days are past their shortest. He'll none of your fine confections, not he; for like the people, he seeketh unto the common fare.

Or the other:

> Time and again 'mid the mountain tops, when the Gods take their pleasure in the torch-lit festival, you have carried a great can of the sort that shepherds carry, but all of gold and filled by your fair hand with the milk of a lioness, and thereof have made a great cheese, whole and unbroken and shining white.

* * * * * *

For days after the ship left Mitylene, Sappho spoke to no one on board but Cleïs and Phœbe. A most pleasant sense of unreality, a detachment from life and its problems, soon took possession of her, and she knew that, soon—to-morrow, perhaps, or the day after—she would begin to write. Snatches of verse, elusive at first, and then more and more near her, where she could almost touch and grasp them, came and went as she sat staring out at the sea.

Already that eleven-syllabled rhythm, famous among later generations as "Sapphic metre," was becoming firmly fixed in her mind.

Long, short; long, short:—it went—long, short, short; long, short; long, short.

$$-\smile,\ -\smile,\ -\smile\smile,\ -\smile,\ -\smile$$

And then the fourth line: long, short; long, short.

Swinburne's *Sapphics* gives an excellent idea of the rhythm of this metre:

> All the night sleep came not upon my eyelids,
> Shed not dew, nor shook nor unclosed a feather,
> Yet with lips shut close and with eyes of iron
> Stood and beheld me.

When Sappho had been sitting on the deck for several days, the rhythm of her poetry beating in gentle insistence against her mind, she suddenly, one afternoon, began to write. And she surprised herself, as real poets must so often be amazed by their own genius, for nothing of her immediate surroundings appeared in her poetry. She must have been more homesick than she admitted to herself, for her lines were about Mitylene and the fields of Lesbos, and she remembered how "on the hills the shepherds trample the larkspur underfoot and the flower lies empurpling in decay on the ground." Only a fragment remains of the poem which expressed all her longing to be again in Mitylene in the spring. This is E. M. Cox's translation:

> By the cool water the breeze murmurs, rustling
> Through apple branches, while from quivering leaves
> Streams down deep slumber. . . .

When Sappho was writing she was often unconscious of her surroundings for hours at a time. She was shut in within herself, and the only thing that penetrated her mind from the outside world was Cleïs calling or asking her a question. And this never really roused her for long from her preoccupation, for she knew that Phœbe was better able than she was herself to look after the child.

If Sappho had not been absorbed by her work, she might have had an adventure on this journey, and

later she regretted that she had not been in the mood to accept and enjoy this opportunity. For she was beginning to realise that her former hopes of meeting women who were at the same time beautiful and intellectually stimulating had been childish and unrealistic in the extreme. Besides, she had grown up, and she knew now that the attractions she would feel for women would not be dictated by her mind, or by any conscious choice.

She had noticed a very beautiful woman who came on board at Chios—and Sappho always noticed beautiful women, whether she had inclination and time to take an active interest in them or not. Sappho never learned this woman's name; what she chiefly remembered about her was the lovely saffron colour of her *chiton* and the fact that she was always conspicuously attentive to little Cleïs.

One evening Phœbe smiled rather mysteriously when she was arranging Sappho's hair for the night.

"What is it?" Sappho asked her.

Then Phœbe told her that this woman from Chios seemed most anxious to meet her.

"What did you say, Phœbe?" she asked.

"I told her that you were busy with your work," Phœbe answered.

"For otherwise you think I might have had time to talk to her?" Sappho interrupted, greatly amused.

Phœbe smiled indulgently, and Sappho was amazed at herself for not having known before how well this

devoted slave understood her. She always thought of Phœbe as very old, or at least ageless, beyond any appreciation of love or sexual attraction. Now Sappho suddenly realised that Phœbe was, after all, only twelve or thirteen years older than she was herself, and that she probably took an intense interest in her mistress's personal life.

Sappho was suddenly sure that Phœbe must have known about her adventure, as a very young girl, with Chloe, and the discreet slave had undoubtedly never believed that the beautiful but dull Lydia had been merely a casual friend.

Sappho smiled at Phœbe in the mirror before her, consciously seeing for the first time how fat her kindly face had become, how small her shrewd little eyes seemed above her chubby cheeks.

Phœbe's eyes were twinkling respectfully but very definitely, and Sappho blushed, but Phœbe went on combing her mistress's hair as though nothing unusual had passed between them. Sappho breathed deeply; it was good to know that Phœbe was so understanding. It made Sappho feel less alone on this ship which was taking her to a strange city which was to be her new home.

She raised her hand above her head and let it rest for a moment on Phœbe's fingers, which were curved round the comb.

"Thank you, Phœbe," was all she said, but she wondered whether the woman was aware that, in this

case, there were many reasons, quite apart from her writing, why she had no time or inclination to bother with the charming lady from Chios.

In the first place, though Sappho was still so young, she could not bear to be pursued. It embarrassed her profoundly when anyone, too obviously, sought her friendship.

If there was any pursuing to be done, she insisted on doing this herself. "Mascula Sappho," Horace called her later, and even Chloe had been wise enough to pretend that Sappho had taken the initiative in their friendship. The lovely creature from Chios, in other words, had only guessed half her secret. Her intuition about Sappho had been right, but it had not been profound.

Even had this stranger been a woman of greater insight, however, Sappho would not have been eager to meet her. She was not, at the moment, particularly receptive to attentions from women. When she was not writing, her mind was absorbed by thoughts of the journey, the adventures before her. She was fully aware, furthermore, that as a poet and a musician she had a great deal to learn, and she knew that she would meet men who might be willing to teach her.

Sappho was childishly excited when they finally reached Corinth. She had many letters of introduction to Corinthian patrons of the arts, and she hoped to

remain in the city for several weeks. She was tired of her own thoughts after the long journey, and eager to talk to other people.

Corinth, however, was a bitter disappointment to her. The moment she arrived she felt that the whole atmosphere of the city was uncongenial to her. For, as the ship docked in the harbour, the Corinthian *Aphrodisia* festival—a noisy, crude, lascivious festival—was being held in the port.

These Corinthian *Aphrodisias* were famous throughout the Greek Empire for their lack of restraint. Bands of prostitutes stood or moved together in the port, loudly offering themselves to the passers-by. Eubulus, writing in the fourth century B.C., said that these prostitutes, "almost naked in fine-spun attire in long array, sold their favours for a small fee, which everyone might enjoy safely and without danger."

Sappho hurried through the port when she had landed in Corinth, hoping that the ugly sights before them would not impress Cleïs' questioning young mind. Everything about this festival was ugly, utterly without glamour, and it made Sappho shudder.

The attitude of the men revolted her more than did the brazenness of the women. She could tell from their manner that these Corinthians would not understand a woman like herself, who was neither a good wife and housekeeper nor a prostitute.

The famous, half-legendary story about Actæon, the son of a man called Melissus, which Sappho heard in

Corinth, made her wonder furthermore whether even as objects of love, or as prostitutes, women were as important in Corinth as they were in other Greek cities. Everywhere in Greece, of course, many men were attracted by young boys, but in Corinth women were apparently less sought after than they were elsewhere.

Many years later, in the first century after Christ, Plutarch told the story of the boy Actæon.

> The son of Melissus was Actæon, the most beautiful and the most modest of those of his own age, so that very many desired him, but chiefly Archias, whose family went back to the Heracleidæ and who was prominent among the Corinthians for his wealth and power. Since the boy refused to be persuaded, he resolved to rape him with violence. He consequently rode at the head of a number of friends and slaves before the house of Melissus and attempted to carry off the boy. But the father and his friends offered a bitter resistance, the neighbours also assisted, and during the struggle between the two parties the lad was dragged hither and thither, was fatally injured, and died. But the father lifted up the boy's dead body, carried it into the market-place, and showed it to the Corinthians, while he demanded from them that they should punish those who had been guilty of his death. They sympathised with him, but otherwise did nothing. The unhappy father afterwards repaired to the Isthmus and threw himself down from a rock, after he had summoned the gods to take vengeance. Soon afterwards a bad harvest and famine visited the state. The oracle declared that it was the wrath of Poseidon, who would not be appeased until the death of Actæon was expiated. When Archias, who was one of those sent to

consult the oracle, heard of this, he did not return to Corinth, but sailed to Sicily and founded the city of Syracuse. There, after he had had two daughters, Ortygia and Syracusa, he was murdered by his favourite Telephus.

Sappho had not before known the legendary story of the founding of Syracuse, where she was going, and she wondered whether the spirit of Archias still dominated men's attitude there. Though she had realised that in most cities of the mainland the attitude towards women was not what she was accustomed to in Lesbos, she had not appreciated that men could be quite so disdainful of " blue stockings "—and she thought consciously, for the first time in many years, about her Uncle Eurygyus' spiteful remarks. She was particularly annoyed, as she knew, of course, that, had she been famous, the Corinthians to whom she had letters of introduction would have received her at once, whether she had been a woman or a man.

As it was, one or two of the men whom she had hoped to meet sent their slaves to the house in which she was staying to ask after her physical welfare and safety, but no one took the trouble to come and see her. She soon realised, too, that apart from this patronising attitude towards women, people in Corinth were not, at the moment, particularly interested in the arts. The city, which was rapidly becoming a great trading centre, was growing increasingly rich, and the inhabitants were far more concerned with accumulating wealth than with discussing literature.

Instead, they talked about their new coinage, about expanding the city, about shipping their goods to all parts of the known world.

Periander was no more gracious to her than were the citizens of Corinth. Sappho was aware that Pittacus had written to him announcing her arrival, and she had vaguely hoped that the ruler of Corinth might make it possible for her to talk to Arion. Periander, however, was escaping from his personal bitterness and unhappiness (Sappho remembered how his tragedy had impressed her as a young girl) by plunging into all sorts of activities. He had so many appointments every day that he had little time to think, and he was constantly planning and supervising the building of new temples.

Hundreds of travellers arrived at Cenchreæ, the Ægean port of Corinth, every month, and left again from Lechæum, the port leading into the Ionian Sea. Periander could not possibly receive all the exiles who passed through his city on their way from remote Ægean islands. And Sappho was merely one of hundreds, as far as he was concerned.

He was told when she landed that she would spend two or three days in Corinth and then sail at once for Syracuse. She was, it is true, given comfortable lodgings and a guide to accompany her wherever she went while she was in the city.

The guide thought he had misunderstood her when, in her soft Æolian dialect, she told him that she wanted

to climb up the steep hill, south of the city, to the sacred citadel—to Acrocorinth. He tried in vain to dissuade her, for the summer was hot, and the prospect of this expedition did not please him. He had thought it would be an easy job to act as guide to a young widow and her child, for he had been sure that she would be too timid in a strange city to leave her lodgings until it was time for her to go on board the ship which was to take her on to Sicily.

Sappho, however, remained firm, especially as the weather was fine and the view from Acrocorinth would be magnificent. She wanted, at least at a distance, to see the outlines of the mountains nearest Athens, and the mountains round Sparta. And she was very thoughtful as she gazed first to the east from the height of Acrocorinth, and then to the south. She realised that, quite spontaneously, she looked first for Athens in the dim, misty distance—a distance of less than fifty miles.

Neither she nor anyone else could have known what Athens was one day to mean to Greece and the world and to the future of civilisation everywhere. She had glanced first in the direction of Athens because that country's war against Lesbos had been one of the determining factors of her life. And suddenly she was vividly reminded of that drive from Eresus to Mytilene, of the smell of pines along the road, of the gentle swishing of her mother's *chiton* whenever she moved in the travelling-cart. Sappho was very silent,

and she and her guide descended the hill slowly and returned to Corinth.

In her discontented mood, the fact that Periander had not graciously received her, and that she had not been given an opportunity to meet Arion, loomed up very large and black in her consciousness. His rebuff made her unsure of herself. The peace and self-confidence she had experienced on the journey left her abruptly. She felt very small and very much alone.

Rationally, she knew that she was being foolish. She was aware that Periander was busy, and that she was only one of many unimportant exiles from Mitylene. But she was also convinced that, had Periander considered her a woman of unusual gifts or promise, he would undoubtedly have made time to see her.

What Sappho did not know about Periander was that he had grown extremely morose in his old age, and hated meeting strangers. He had never recovered from the shock of his wife's death, and shrank from seeing other women. The manner of his death, some years later, made her realise just how eccentric a man he had been. He ordered two professional assassins to go to a certain road at night, to kill the first man they met and to bury him on the spot. The man whom they would encounter, so Periander told the murderers, was a dangerous character, and should be removed. Then he himself went out to be killed by them. This was Periander's horrible suicide.

Not knowing what a strange person Periander was,

Sappho, quite irrationally, interpreted his refusal to receive her as a reflection on her poetry. As she sat alone in her dreary lodgings in the evening, Sappho seriously took stock of her talent. She had never really doubted her own powers, even as a young girl, when she met Alcæus and was eager to show him her verse. She realised that what she had really wanted of him was a confirmation of her own self-confidence, and nothing more.

Now, in view of the cool reception she had been given in Corinth, she wondered unhappily whether, throughout her life, she had not over-estimated her own ability as a poet, whether, in the great world to which she had come, she would find that her work was not good enough to compete successfully with that of distinguished poets and musicians. Already she had, of course, realised that her poetry was extremely personal, that without emotional drive and experience she would never produce anything remarkable. And yet she seemed to lack the capacity, enjoyed by so many male poets, of going through shortlived but violent emotional experiences which inspired them without causing them undue suffering.

In other words—so Sappho knew with a sudden flash of insight into her own character—she might never derive the satisfaction and the creative urge from her emotional reactions without, at the same time, being made intensely unhappy: so unhappy, perhaps, that she would be unable to write.

One line of a poem has been preserved which she probably wrote in this despondent mood: "I yearn and I seek . . ." she wrote, but she was quite conscious of the fact that neither she nor any human being could ever force his or her emotions.

Never, even in moments of Sappho's greatest depression, did she sit back passively and allow her misery or her introspection to overwhelm her. Always she made an effort to rouse herself, to do something about it. She was never weak or indulgent towards herself. And on this occasion, before she sailed from Corinth, she resolved to master the technique of writing, for, though she could do nothing to hasten the emotional experience she needed, she could perfect her style and increase her knowledge. On the long journey from Corinth to Sicily, sailing up the western coast of Greece, and then across the Ionian Sea, she concentrated on her work, practising various forms of verse, and reading, reading, until Phœbe remonstrated and told her that she must rest.

There is definite historical evidence of Sappho's journey to Sicily. An inscription on the Parian marble in the British Museum mentions her stay on the island. The Parian marble, a chronological record prepared by some ancient historian, probably in the third century B.C., includes the following statement:

"When Aristocles ruled over the Athenians, Sappho fled from Mitylene and sailed to Sicily. . . ."

The date mentioned for her flight is no longer legible, but it was obviously round 590 B.C.

Syracuse, the most important settlement in Sicily, where Sappho was going, and where she was to spend five years of her life, was the oldest Dorian city on the island of Sicily. According to Thucydides, it was founded in 734 B.C.—about a hundred and forty years before Sappho.

In the sixth century, when Sappho arrived, Syracuse was a colony of Corinth. Already the city, which was famous for its wealth and its luxurious living standards, was gaining in importance. The Syracusans were assiduously imitating the pleasures and extravagances enjoyed by the inhabitants of Corinth.

Later Syracuse became the greatest Grecian city in the West, and political events in Syracuse affected the Grecian world as profoundly as did the upheavals in Athens. This seems strange at the distance of centuries, but it is a fact that Syracuse was once as influential as Athens, and the Sicilian city defended Greece against Carthage, just as Athens was the bulwark against the Persians.

The wealth and bustle and self-confidence of Syracuse were strikingly apparent at the time when Sappho came there. The daughter city was trying to rival Corinth's building activities: new houses and

temples were springing up with almost vulgar rapidity; a bridge had been built connecting Ortygia, the island separated from the mainland by a narrow channel, and the city herself; an impressive temple to Apollo had been erected on Ortygia, and on the hilly slopes on the west of the island large numbers of luxurious villas had been built. These residences always reminded Sappho of her childhood home in Eresos.

Sappho believed in arranging her immediate surroundings before she began to adjust herself to new friends and occupations. She had a considerable amount of money left, and she took one of these villas by the sea, and organised her household. She knew that, if she perfected her technique, she would always be able to earn her living, and provide for her child, by writing wedding poems and other verses for public occasions. Throughout her life she was never poor, and the refinements of living meant so much to her that poverty would undoubtedly have stifled her talent.

As soon as she was settled in her new home, Sappho began to work in earnest. Suidas later spoke of her as "the inventor of the quill for striking the lyre," and she was seriously experimenting with her cithara, the instrument used for public occasions, and with the more intimate lyre.

Already she had developed the idea of combining poetry and music, and she wrote her verses so that they could be recited to musical accompaniment.

Later, when she became more interested in dancing, in rhythmic movements of the human body, she conceived her art in terms of a combination of all three: the spoken words, the music and the dance, a combination which, in his interpretation of *melos*, Plato later defined as a "compound out of three things, speech, music and rhythm."

Sappho was very eager to discuss her work and her point of view in general with Stesichorus of Himera, who was then living in Catana, north of Syracuse, and who often came to the city. She had heard that he loved teaching, loved having disciples who looked up to him, and she immediately sent him a message asking whether he would receive her.

Stesichorus, a man about twenty years older than Sappho, was famous for the new metre he had introduced: the Strophe, the Antistrophe, and the Epodus —the turn, the return, and the rest. His name had originally been Tesias, but he was called Stesichorus in honour of his invention.

In contrast to Alcman's or Sappho's more subjective poetry, Stesichorus' verse was objective and somewhat stiff. As Dionysius of Halicarnassus remarked in his *Criticism of Ancient Writers*, Stesichorus loved "the grandeur of the setting of his theme, in which he always had an eye to the characters and the stations of his *dramatis personæ*."

Stesichorus was old-fashioned, conventional and a little pompous. He himself might have written his

obituary notice in the *Palatine Anthology*, which gives an excellent impression of the man.

> The smoky plain of Catana [says the Anthology] hath given burial to that copious mouthpiece of an immeasurable muse, Stesichorus, in whose breast, so runs the philosophic rede of Pythagoras, the soul that had been Homer's found a second dwelling place.

Stesichorus had a tremendous respect for traditions, he was slightly suspicious of new departures in literature, he revered the gods and the ancient heroes.

> It was said [as Suidas reports] that for writing an abuse of Helen of Troy, he was struck with blindness, but received his sight again on writing an encomium of her in obedience to a dream.

When Sappho met Stesichorus, who took a fatherly interest in her at once, for he appreciated her talent, though sometimes he disapproved of her, she was not disturbed by his dictatorial manner, for she knew at once that he was not only a man of very great knowledge, but, what was far rarer, that he was a really wise human being. His pompousness, unlike her Uncle Eurygyus', was born of timidity, a lack of self-assurance, and not of conceit. And Stesichorus was a kind man, though he consistently pretended to be unmoved by the miseries of the world.

Sappho herself no longer took an active interest in politics, but when she learned what Stesichorus had once written about dictators, she realised that, if the

world would accept his advice, the history of the present and the future would take on a different course.

Again and again she read what Stesichorus had said in a public speech when the Himereans had elected Phalaris, a dictator, as their ruler with unlimited powers. It did not surprise her that he had been banished after making this declaration, for her own political experiences had made her cynical, and she had learned that truth and wisdom are not wanted by peoples involved in political upheavals.

In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle records Stesichorus' advice to the Himereans:

> A horse who had a meadow all to himself, found his title disputed by a stag who came and destroyed the pasturage. Desiring to avenge himself, he begged the man's help to punish the stag, which the man promised him if he would take bit and bridle of him and let him mount him javelins in hand. The bargain struck, the man got on his back; but the horse immediately found that he had received not vengeance on the stag but servitude to the man. "Even so you," Stesichorus said, "should beware lest your desire to be avenged on your enemies bring you into a similar plight. You are bridled now by choosing a dictator; if you give him a bodyguard and allow him to get on your back, you will quickly find yourselves the slaves of Phalaris."

Sappho read this story to Cleïs, but the child was not interested in stories or reading. She did well at her lessons, but Sappho sometimes felt she excelled chiefly because she was ambitious: she wanted to be

first, a leader, in everything she did. Her little ego constantly demanded attention, and often, when visitors came to the house and admired Sappho, Cleïs was intensely jealous of her mother. At such times Sappho would feel that she did not really know her daughter, but usually the child was charming and sensitive, and Sappho did not allow herself to be worried about her development.

Cleïs was particularly pleased whenever Stesichorus came to see them. She was never deceived by his gruff manner, and always, when no one was looking, he would quickly hand her some little gift he had brought for her.

He must have proved a severer teacher than Alcæus. The Himerean was never late for an appointment, he rarely jested with Sappho, he had little appreciation of her subtle wit, and he was occasionally very literal-minded. Sometimes, when she had put everything she had into her lute-playing—" Up, my lute divine," she once wrote, " and make thyself a thing of speech " —Stesichorus would express his satisfaction with her, telling her that she was becoming very proficient on the instrument. She would smile, knowing that from this hard taskmaster such dry words were praise indeed.

To develop her style, she probably wrote many verses under Stesichorus' tutelage, verses about rulers and heroes and legends, his favourite subjects. But he also wrote love-poems, usually about unhappy and

unrequited love, and he contributed the character of Daphnis, the shepherdess, to literature.

Only a few fragments of the poems Sappho wrote under Stesichorus' tuition have been preserved, but one of these markedly reflects his influence. This poem, preserved on a third-century papyrus, is called the *Marriage of Andromache*, and does not sound in the least like Sappho's other work.

The poem tells of a herald who brought fair tidings to the people of Ida, urging Hector and his comrades to " bring from sacred Thebe and fair-flowing Placia, by ship upon the briny sea, the dainty Andromache of the glancing eye." Later, when Hector and Andromache were mounted in the chariots, Sappho seemed to forget that she was writing under Stesichorus', her instructor's, supervision, and her own individual style, her spontaneity, asserts itself when she goes on :

> The sweet-toned flute and the lyre were mingled with the sound of the rattle, aye, and the maidens sang clear and well a holy song, till a marvellous great sound rose to the sky and the Gods in heaven laughed. Everywhere in the ways was festal mirth; for bowls and cups were mixed, and myrrh and cassia and frankincense curled aloft. Meanwhile the elder women raised a loud cry, and all the men shouted amain a delightful song of thanksgiving unto Far-Darting God of the lyre, and hymned the praise of the god-like Hector and Andromache.

Stesichorus was a little shocked when Sappho described the great Gods as laughing. This he thought disrespectful, but fundamentally he approved

of Sappho because she kept aloof from the luxurious and often ribald parties in Syracuse, to which she was frequently invited.

Stesichorus thought that moral scruples kept Sappho away from the sophisticated, pleasure-loving men and women in the city; he believed that she was a highly respectable woman, a widow who probably still mourned her husband's death.

Actually, of course, she never had moral scruples about anything; she considered any action perfectly moral which did not hurt others or herself. She did not join in the hilarious gatherings in Syracuse for the simple reason that she did not enjoy them. People who drank to excess offended her æsthetically, not morally, and the undiscriminating sexual promiscuity of the Syracusans disgusted her. Few people who saw her moving about with such cool self-assurance realised this fact, but Sappho was at heart an incurable romantic.

"I love delicacy," she once confessed, "and for me Love has the splendour and the beauty of the sun."

Commenting on this passage, Athenæus recognised the fastidiousness that always restrained Sappho, and he emphasises that "Sappho, being a thorough woman and a poet besides, was ashamed to separate honour from elegance, and speaks thus, making it obvious to everybody that the desire of life which, she confessed, had brilliancy and honour in it; and these things especially belong to virtue."

Naturally, despite her usual aloofness, Sappho was always moved by beauty as such, and often she was impressed by a meeting with some beautiful woman. The fragment of one letter she probably wrote in Syracuse still exists and records a passing fancy she experienced.

> . . . for you came to my house the other day [she wrote to some woman whose name is unknown to us] and sang to me, and that is why I come. O talk with me, come down and make me free of your beauty. For we are walking near, and well you know it. O send your handmaidens away, and may the gods grant me whatsoever they have for me. Were there a road which man could tread to great Olympus, I should always . .

* * * * * *

Sappho must have had several charming experiences in Syracuse, but these attractions never lasted long. She did not make friends easily. Her reserve was no longer a protective mask, it had become an innate part of her nature. She was beginning to wonder whether she would ever care very deeply for any human being —apart from her child, who was as aloof and undemonstrative as she was herself—and whether she would not spend most of her life alone, no matter how many friends and superficial acquaintances she might have. This attitude, her own unspoken fear of solitude, hardened her, and she became very much a woman of the world while she was in Sicily.

She was increasingly particular about her clothes

and her appearance. Her fastidiousness was a very real expression of her nature. Her hair was always perfectly done. She never let herself go in any way.

As she was not devoting her energies to personal relationships, she allowed her work to absorb her strength. Perhaps it was fortunate for her that she was now forced to earn her living. She did so, and very well, by writing wedding poems.

"This will I now sing skilfully, to please my friends," she had resolved, and her epithalamies, which she enjoyed writing, expressed her own phantasies and wishes.

Sappho's marriage poems, reflecting the Greeks' worship of Eros, the God of Love, are an example of the tremendous contradictions possible within one age. For while she was praising love as the "dearest offspring of Earth and Heaven," the Prophet Ezekiel, then in exile, was thundering out his condemnation of human passion.

In the following words, for instance, he violently attacked Aholibah, obviously a woman who was not a puritan.

> For thus said the Lord God; Behold, I will deliver thee into the hand of them whom thou hatest, into the hand of them from whom thy mind is alienated:
>
> And they shall deal with thee hatefully, and shall take away all thy labour, and shall leave thee naked and bare: and the nakedness of thy whoredoms shall be discovered, both thy lewdness and thy whoredoms.

I will do these things unto thee, because thou hast gone a whoring after the heathen, and because thou art polluted with their idols.

Thou hast walked in the way of thy sister; therefore will I give her cup into thine hand.

Thus saith the Lord God; Thou shalt drink of thy sister's cup deep and large: thou shalt be laughed to scorn and had in derision; it containeth much.

Thou shalt be filled with drunkenness and sorrow, with the cup of astonishment and desolation, with the cup of thy sister Samaria.

Thou shalt even drink it and suck it out, and thou shalt break the sherds thereof, and pluck off thine own breasts: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God.

* * * * * *

Happy bridegroom [Sappho was writing during the same age] the marriage is accomplished as you prayed it should be, and the maiden you prayed for is yours . . . and soft and gentle is shed over her delightsome face. . . .

Or in another wedding poem:

Thy form, O bride, is all delight; thy eyes are of a gentle hue; thy face is overspread with love; Aphrodite has done thee exceeding honour.

Soon travellers in Syracuse, who had heard Sappho's wedding poems, repeated them in their homes in various parts of the Empire, and these verses became famous throughout the Greek world. All over Greece there were young men and young women who wished that Sappho lived near them, and that she could preside at their wedding feast.

Sappho's epithalamies, and the gracious manner

in which she led the dance at marriage festivals, lived on in the memory of her fellow-countrymen for centuries.

Himerius, the Greek rhetorician, who lived in the fourth century of our era, admitted that

> when it came to the rites of Aphrodite the other poets left the song for the lyre and the making of the epithalamy entirely to Sappho, who when the contests were over, entered the chamber, wove the bower, made the bride-bed, gathered the maidens into the bride-chamber, and brought Aphrodite in her Grace-drawn car with a bevy of Loves to be her playfellows; and her she adorned with hyacinths about the hair, leaving all but what was parted by the brow to float free upon the wayward breeze, and them she decked with gold on wing and tress and made them go on before the car and wave their torches on high.

The reputation Sappho established as a poet and a musician while she was in Sicily was the basis of this later fame. And at the time she was not indifferent to her increasing renown. "I think someone will remember us hereafter," she once said frankly, for, in common with many people whose personal lives are disappointing or empty, she derived a certain passing satisfaction from the approval of the world at large.

When, five years after she had come to Syracuse, she was informed that she could return to Mitylene, she was being hailed as a great writer. In his *Orations*, Cicero mentions a bust of Sappho which had been stolen from the town hall at Syracuse, and this reflects the

prominence she must have been given in that city. And in his *Anthology* Stobæus relates that

> one evening over the wine, Execestides, the nephew of Solon the Athenian, sang a song of Sappho's which his uncle liked so much that he bade the boy teach it to him, and when one of the company asked in surprise "What for?" Solon replied, "I want to learn it and die."

Sappho had left Mitylene as an obscure political refugee with artistic aspirations. She returned to her home a poet whose gifts were generally acknowledged. And though she was only twenty-six, she was tired, and disillusioned about life. Syracuse had been interesting, she had learned a great deal, but she had made no lasting ties, no permanent friendships.

CHAPTER SIX

AS the day drew near for Sappho to sail, she was troubled by the prospect of returning to Mitylene. Only men and women who have themselves been expatriots can understand that peculiar mixture of joy and fear which takes possession of people who are faced with the reality of their own country, which they have idealised for years from afar.

Cleïs, who was about ten, intuitively understood her mother, and the child was conscious of Sappho's agitation, for when she was moved or worried, her manner was particularly calm, her poise more perfect and controlled. Cleïs usually avoided Sappho when she was in one of these detached moods; she was aware, even as a very small child, that Sappho preferred to be alone.

Sappho called herself a fool for dreading this return to Mitylene, but she was afraid of the added loneliness which would come from the surroundings she knew so well. Every house, every turning of the road, the harbour at every hour of the day, the sea as it looked at dawn, and at evening—all these sights were infinitely familiar to her, like old and cherished friends, and the very familiarity of these scenes would, she realised, make her more acutely aware that she was lonely.

"I am becoming ridiculously sentimental in my declining years," she remarked one evening to Phœbe without any preliminary explanation of her mood.

Phœbe, who was arranging Sappho's bed for the night, merely grunted in reply. Several minutes passed, and then, as though to herself, the woman muttered: "Declining years . . . you've not begun to live yet—that's just the trouble."

Sappho glanced up at Phœbe, but said nothing. She knew that her slave did not approve of young women who lived alone. And whenever any attractive woman called on Sappho, Phœbe hoped that she would remain as a visitor in the house for weeks.

Phœbe's unspoken criticism of her aloofness always made Sappho more cheerful, and she now told herself that outwardly, at least, there was nothing to dread in Mitylene. Her political past had been forgiven, and to show that he wanted to forget it as well, Pittacus had appointed her youngest brother, Larichos, as cup-bearer in the town hall of the city. Only young men whose political record was beyond reproach were chosen for this high office.

Sappho was glad that she was in favour with Pittacus, as she would need his support. For she had no intention of leading a life of leisure when she returned to Lesbos, writing occasional verse and submitting to the adulation of her fellow-countrymen. She was, by nature, too restless to be an inactive poet who sat about waiting for inspiration.

She had decided some time before that if and when she was allowed to leave Sicily and go home, she would establish a school, "The House of the Muses,"

in which she would teach young girls music, dancing and the art of writing and appreciating poetry. Sappho's Academy was one of the forerunners of the famous Academy of Philosophers, founded by Plato in Athens almost two hundred years later.

In Plato's day the State contributed to the upkeep of this academy, which was generously endowed. Sappho did not consider the possibility that Pittacus might give her school any financial support of this kind, but to make it a success his patronage was necessary.

She also hoped that, after her pupils had been sufficiently trained, she would be asked to organise processional dances at the festivals in honour of the Gods.

When the day came for Sappho to leave Syracuse, she found that fame was not as pleasant as she had thought it. The summer was very hot, and she was exhausted by the farewell festivities arranged for her, bored by the speeches praising her as a great writer, and impatient with the crowd of people who came to see her off at the boat.

She realised that she liked appreciation of her work in the abstract, and not when it took on these concrete forms of sociability. She preferred her privacy to fame, and she was profoundly relieved when she finally sailed.

The journey to Corinth was trying, because Cleïs was ill with some trivial childish complaint; but

Phœbe, who adored the child, thought that she would die at any moment. As a result, Phœbe was irritable and had to be managed, and Sappho disliked being forced to manage anyone.

In Corinth, where she broke the journey, as she had done years before, she was overwhelmed by hospitality and attentions from her admiring public. A messenger had arrived from Athens inviting her to visit the city, but she did not go, as she wanted to reach Mitylene as quickly as possible, and to settle down again to a normal existence. During the journey itself and the weeks before she sailed, life had been so hectic that she had known no mental peace. She had not written a line for months.

Terrible storms seemed to pursue the ship on which she sailed from Corinth to the Ægean coast. Sappho did not really mind whether she herself lived or died—she never clung fiercely to life—but she was frightened on this journey lest something might happen to her child.

The memory of these storms on the Ægean haunted her for months. The vessel was driven far south out of her course, and finally reached the harbour of Rhodes. The passengers were glad to land there and await another ship which would transport them up the coast and to Lesbos. Fortunately some of Sappho's friends in Syracuse had relatives in Rhodes, who were pleased and flattered when she was thus forced to be their guest.

Years afterwards, Sappho remembered these devastating storms at sea, and a fragment about them has been handed down to us:

> When tempests rage [she wrote] the mariner, for fear of the great blasts of the wind, doth cast his cargo overboard and drive his vessel ashore; as for me, I pray I may be bound nowhither in time of storm, nor be fain with fear lying heavy in my heart, to cast my cargo for worthless into the deep; but if so be it should fall to Nereus in his flowing pageant of the sea to receive the gifts of my goods. . . .

Sappho wrote these verses a considerable time after this frightening experience at sea. When she landed in Rhodes she felt no inclination to write. She was tired, and she wanted only to sleep and to rest. She was decidedly not in the mood to meet strangers, and she was annoyed, one day, shortly after their arrival, when Phœbe brought her a letter from a girl, who shyly asked to see her, and admitted that she longed to be a poet and hoped for a chance of showing the great Sappho her verse.

The letter was signed Erinna, and when Sappho read the childish, unformed signature, she would have been amazed to know that, one day, this name, with her own and seven others, would be included in the *Palatine Anthology* among the nine great women poets, the "divinely tongued women who were reared on the hymns of Helicon and the Pierian rock of Macedon."

There is also an epigram on Erinna in the Anthology. Here is Symonds' translation:

These are Erinna's songs: how sweet, how slight!
For she was but a girl of nineteen years:
Yet stronger far than what most men can write:
Had death delayed, whose fame had equalled hers?

Many centuries after Erinna's death her work and Sappho's shared the same fate: their verse was destroyed by the Church. Of Erinna's, who died young, only a few lines have been saved, whereas Sappho was so universally acclaimed during her lifetime that her poems had been copied and re-copied by her contemporaries and by men in the generations immediately following her own, and it was impossible for the Church to destroy all of her poetry.

> I was told as a boy [Petrus Alcyonius recorded in the sixteenth century] . . . that the priests of the Greek church had such influence with the Byzantine Emperors that they burnt at their request a large number of the works of the old Greek poets, particularly those which dealt with the passions, obscenities, and follies of lovers, and thus perished the plays of Menander, Diphilus, Apollodorus, and Alexis and the poems of Sappho, Erinna, Anacreon, Mimnermus, Bion, Alcman, and Alcæus.

Erinna was going through a critical phase of her youth when she heard that Sappho was in Rhodes. She was then about fifteen. Her parents were honest, unimaginative Dorian settlers—Erinna wrote in a mixture of the Dorian and Æolian dialects—who had originally come to Telos, a smaller island north-west of Rhodes, and had then moved to Rhodes.

Erinna's parents were kindly but conservative

people who were convinced that their young daughter's place was in the home. She had once nervously spoken to her mother about her wish to become a poet, but the older woman had been shocked, telling her that it was far more useful for her to work patiently at the loom. Erinna never, until after she met Sappho, mentioned her verse to her mother again.

It had cost Erinna a great effort to discuss her poetry with anyone, and her mother's lack of understanding had driven the highly sensitive and reserved girl into an almost sullen state of defiance, a defiance which was the more poignant as she was fond of her mother and resented the conflict thus created within her.

Erinna was very unhappy, and extremely lonely. In her childhood and early youth she had been passionately attached to Baucis, a girl of her own age, but Baucis had died shortly before her wedding, leaving Erinna desolate and without anyone in whom she could confide. An epitaph which Erinna wrote to Baucis, and which has been preserved, reflects her despair at this tragic loss.

> Erinna, my faithful companion [this epitaph ends], placed this stone and this text upon my grave.

After the death of her friend, Erinna secretly began a long poem called *The Spindle*. This poem has not been preserved, but it is mentioned by later historians, who record that it was three hundred lines in length

and is the young woman's bitter lament about a fate which forced her, day after day, to sit at the loom and weave, only to please her exacting parents, whom she wanted to hate because they were preventing her from living her own life, but whom she loved despite their lack of understanding because they were, at heart, such kindly creatures.

Some scholars believe that the fragment of one of Sappho's poems was one she later wrote for Erinna, because Sappho herself never wasted her time spinning. In several of Sappho's fragments the lines she writes are words she has heard someone else say.

> My sweet mother [this fragment goes] broken by soft Aphrodite's spell, longing for a youth, I can no more weave the cloth.

As these lines imply, Erinna was in such a disturbed frame of mind that she did not know what she wanted, emotionally speaking. She had been passionately attached to Baucis, and now she was devoted to some youth. Perhaps she had merely outgrown her former interest in women, for it was most unusual, in ancient Greece, where girls were grown up at fourteen or fifteen, for young women not to know their own minds.

Actually, however, when Sappho met Erinna, the girl was less concerned with emotions of any sort than she was with her intense desire to be free to write poetry. She was, to a certain extent, in the

position Sappho had experienced in her uncle's home before she met Alcæus, except that Sappho's feelings for Eurygyus were not in the least ambiguous, and she had suffered no conflict about leaving him. Besides, Sappho had been strong and independent even when she was very young, whereas Erinna was a weaker character and without much initiative.

She was doubly unhappy because she was conscious of her own weakness; she felt that she should put up a fight against her parents—other women in the Ægean Islands had taken a firm stand. But instead of doing anything about it herself, Erinna prayed daily to the Gods to give her health and strength, for they, she hoped, would help her to overcome her own passivity.

At times she had been so desperate that she was tired of living; she longed to die, this seemed the only way to kill her desire for freedom, which had become an obsession. Some of the very few lines by Erinna which still exist indicate how far her misery had gone:

> Soon shall this "faint echo" be wafted to Hades [she wrote sadly] and all then will be silent in the grave; for the darkness of death steals over the eyes.

Erinna's despair had made her reckless, otherwise, hating and fearing rebuffs as she did, she would never have summoned up courage to write to Sappho, a complete stranger, who might not only refuse to see her, but tell her parents about it as well.

In her hopeless mood, however, Erinna did not care what happened; the danger of rousing her parents' anger seemed no longer to matter. Subconsciously, of course, Erinna was hoping to bring about some definite decision about her future. Probably, in fact, she would have been glad if someone else had told her parents how miserable she was.

When Phœbe handed Sappho Erinna's message, she sighed, slightly bored, but she did not refuse to see the girl. Throughout her long career she never sent away anyone who wanted or needed her critical advice. Besides, always whenever she was asked to read the poems of some young writer, she hoped to discover talent. And she loved teaching. She derived a tremendous satisfaction from showing younger writers how they could improve. She loved exerting her critical faculties, and finding the weaknesses and the strong points in the work of young people struggling for self-expression.

Erinna's message had roused Sappho's curiosity. In Syracuse young poets had frequently asked her to judge their verse, and most of them had sent a scroll with their request to see her. They usually assumed that Sappho would have leisure and inclination to read their work at once.

This girl in Rhodes had taken nothing for granted. She had merely asked whether Sappho would see her. This consideration reflected a certain amount of imagination. Erinna had heard about Sappho's terrible

voyage, and she obviously thought it very possible that the older woman would not wish to be bothered by strangers.

Instinctively Sappho felt that Erinna had written to her without the knowledge or consent of her parents. No one in Greece had moral prejudices against a woman like herself who did not care for men, but Sappho had often found in Sicily that ambitious mothers with marriageable daughters were none too eager to have these daughters know her too well.

For after Sappho became famous as a poet, her private life—as others thought she lived it—had been widely discussed in Syracuse wherever women met to exchange the latest gossip of the town.

Sappho instructed Phœbe to find out who this girl was and where she lived. Phœbe's little eyes gleamed with delight; she adored anything that seemed to her like an intrigue. She nodded as Sappho spoke: yes, she would find out who the girl was, and then speak to her one day in the market-place and tell her that Sappho would see her.

When Erinna came, Sappho was at once arrested by the girl's manner and appearance. She was painfully shy, her every gesture showed how much the older woman's opinion of her work would mean to her, and yet she was curiously self-assured and aloof, as though no other human being could really touch her. She seemed like a daughter who would bend outwardly to her parents' wishes—as long as she was

fond of them—but none the less a girl whose personality had remained intact and unaffected by the severe discipline imposed upon her at home.

Sappho, who was beginning to despise the adulation heaped upon her by many of her contemporaries, was pleased because it was quite clear that Erinna was not in the least impressed by the fact that she was talking to a famous poet. She was respectful, she never forgot that Sappho was ten years older than she was herself, and an accomplished craftsman in the art which she hoped, one day, to master.

Despite Erinna's modest manner, however, one felt that the reason she was not in awe of Sappho was because, in some curious way, she felt within herself a power and a talent equal to Sappho's. And Sappho was sure that had this independent girl not liked her, she would have made some polite excuse and left, for she would have been unwilling to discuss her writing with anyone who was not sympathetic to her.

Erinna's appearance appealed to Sappho strongly. The slender girl was not tall—not much taller than Sappho—and the narrowness of her face was emphasised by her large eyes and a broad though beautifully shaped mouth. She was well dressed, though her *chiton*, a "gossamer garment," as Sappho called it, was not dyed purple or blue or any other of the fashionable colours. Her desire to emancipate herself from her parents' old-fashioned ideas of clothes was expressed in her feet: she wore sandals of a very

modern design, and Sappho smiled as she noticed the "broidered strap of beautiful Lydian work" which "covered her feet."

Sappho was curiously moved as she listened to Erinna. She was discussing her work intelligently and Sappho dreaded the moment when she would finally take from the girl the scroll she was holding and begin to read the first part of *The Spindle* which Erinna had brought her.

"I think that no maiden shall ever see the sunlight who shall have thy wisdom," Sappho wrote later when her mind was obsessed with thoughts of Erinna. Now, however, at their first meeting, Sappho was merely afraid she would be disappointed, that the girl might have a good mind but no outstanding talent.

Then Sappho began to read. Her fingers round the scroll tightened; she was strangely silent. She was experiencing that tremendous and rare event of discovering a fellow-poet. Never before had she had this experience. For the first time someone had brought her verse which reflected genius as well as talent.

There were rough passages in *The Spindle*. Erinna had not yet had an opportunity to find a teacher. Her style, her technique needed improving, polishing, tightening, but there was no question in Sappho's mind that this timid child would one day be a greater poet than she was herself. It was amazing, almost incredible, that a girl so young should have produced this work of art.

Sappho spoke quietly enough when she had finished reading, but Erinna was struck by the depths and the echoes in her voice. She had been a little disturbed when she first saw Sappho, because, quite unreasonably, she had expected this great poet to be tall, and stately, and very beautiful. Now the beauty of Sappho's voice compensated her somewhat for the disappointment she had felt to find that Sappho was small and decidedly plain.

Erinna brushed aside these thoughts; she sat very still as Sappho spoke. She did not care whether Sappho was beautiful or not, as long as she would tell her frankly what she thought of *The Spindle*.

The younger woman was aware only that Sappho was praising her verse, telling her that she must go on, that she must have a chance to study and to learn. Erinna was in that stage of her development where nothing mattered but her writing; she was in a highly impersonal mood. She was entirely unconscious, therefore, of Sappho's attitude. She was unaware of Sappho's sudden agitation, which astonished Sappho herself quite as much as it would have amazed the girl had she realised what had happened to the other woman.

Erinna was surprised, therefore, when Sappho rose, abruptly closing the interview, and asked whether she could keep *The Spindle* for a day or two. She arranged to meet Erinna at a certain place on the beach the next morning, and assured her that she would, in the meantime, consider the situation and see what she could do to help her.

After the girl had left, Sappho went down to the beach to walk, and remained away from the house so long that Phœbe was anxious. Sappho knew quite well what this meeting with Erinna had meant to her. She welcomed the emotions which swept through her, but at the same time she was frightened.

> "As for me," she wrote rather helplessly, "love has shaken my wits as a down-rushing whirlwind falls upon the oaks."

And she seemed to have as little power to control her emotions as she would have had to control a wind that swept down suddenly from the mountains. It was as though some force of Nature, which she was powerless to direct or influence in any way, had taken possession of her.

Her mind told her that Erinna was not in a receptive mood as far as emotions were concerned, her reason told her that she would only frighten the girl away if she did not hide her own feelings from her, but she found it impossible to listen to her mind, or to reason.

For before her loomed the certainty that next week, or the week after, or at the latest next month, a ship would come to Rhodes and carry her back to Lesbos, and this, unless she had by then persuaded Erinna to go with her, would mean that she would lose the girl forever.

Naturally Sappho was tempted to give up everything, her future and her work and her plans for the Academy,

and to remain indefinitely in Rhodes, where she could be near Erinna; but, unfortunately for herself, Sappho took motherhood seriously, and she knew that she must return to Mitylene and make a home for Cleïs among her own people, a home where she would feel she belonged. Agitated as she was, Sappho also realised, that apart from her delight in Erinna's companionship, she would never be happy in Rhodes, and whatever attitude the girl assumed towards her, this unhappiness, this discontent of an active woman forced to inactivity in a strange country, would react disastrously on their relationship.

No, Sappho decided, not Rhodes, Lesbos. She must at all costs persuade Erinna to go with her to Mitylene.

With an effort Sappho waited until their third or fourth meeting before she spoke to the girl. They were walking along the sandy beach one evening when Sappho gently put her hand on the girl's arm and told her very simply that she wanted her to go back to Mitylene with her.

Erinna stopped, staring at Sappho. She understood at once what Sappho meant, and she was obviously startled. Then the startled expression on her narrow face changed; she looked hurt, at first, and then a little frightened. Sappho was sick with fear as to what Erinna would answer, and she suddenly remembered her painful interview with Alcæus years before, when she herself had been hurt and disappointed by the

love of a friend whose friendship had been so necessary to her.

Erinna shook her head violently. That was her answer. Then Sappho turned and walked quietly away.

The girl gazed after her for a long time. In so far as she had any energy left for personal emotions, in so far as she was conscious of feeling anything at all, she was still fond of the harmless youth whom Sappho later mentioned in the poem. He made no demands on her, she could be as detached as she liked with him—he was just there, that was all, and quite satisfied to adore her from afar. And he did as she liked, always; this compensated her for the obedience she was forced to show in her home. Besides, one of the chief reasons for her discontent was her mother's gentle but insistent domination; and the idea that Sappho, or any older woman, should direct her life in any way terrified her beyond words.

After that evening, Erinna avoided Sappho; she refused to come to her house or meet her in the market-place. Sappho was forced to send written messages whenever she wanted to communicate with the girl. Probably there were many letters, but only one line exists of the poem Sappho asked Phœbe to take to Erinna after she had refused to go to Lesbos with her.

> "One more scornful than thee, Erinna," this line says, "I have never found. . . ."

Another letter exists among Sappho's fragments, which was probably addressed to Erinna. Perhaps this letter, recording their last painful interview, was never sent. And it seems strange that when, in the puritanical ardour of the Church, so much of Sappho's work was ruthlessly destroyed, this very frank document should have escaped destruction.

> ". . . and I answered you: 'I swear to you by the Goddess that although I, like you, had of Zeus but one virginity, nevertheless I feared not the threshold beyond which Hera had bidden me cast it away.'—Aye, thus I heartened you, and cried aloud: 'That night was sweet enough for me, neither have you, dear maid, anything to fear. . . .'"

Sappho was miserably unhappy, she was tormented by a feeling of frustration, and besides, she despised herself for being a fool. She had allowed her sudden overwhelming passion to precipitate her actions, and she had thus frightened the girl away.

She realised with remorse that she should not have said anything about her personal feelings until she had effectively helped the younger poet to break away from her restricted home. Sappho admitted with bitter regret that had she had more self-control, she might have exerted a certain influence on Erinna's parents, and made them see that their daughter's talent was more important than the labours she performed at the loom.

Sappho was determined to make amends for her

own impulsiveness. She knew that there was one man on the island of Rhodes who might persuade Erinna's parents to allow her to leave home. This man was Cleobulos, a Dorian, one of the Seven Wise Men, who lived in Lindos, on the east coast of the island, south of the town of Rhodes.

Cleobulos was famous not only for his wisdom, but also for his progressive attitude towards the education of women. His own daughter, Cleobuline, was trained as thoroughly as though she had been a son, and he felt very strongly that the education of girls, the development of their intellectual gifts, was quite as important to the State as the schooling of boys.

Sappho sent him a message and a few lines of Erinna's long poem, and it may have been partly due to his influence that Erinna was finally allowed by her parents to go to Mitylene to study music, poetry and dancing. When she did come to Lesbos, a year or two later, Sappho's feelings for Erinna had changed. Sappho's frustration, the nagging dissatisfaction she had felt towards herself in Rhodes, had caused her passion for the younger woman to be shortlived. It was as though, psychologically speaking, Sappho had lost a limb. The limb itself no longer mattered, but its loss handicapped Sappho for life.

When Erinna died shortly afterwards, at the age of nineteen, Sappho's grief was strangely impersonal. She was more moved by the end of so much talent, by

the abrupt and cruel termination of a life which had only just begun to be lived, than she was by any personal sense of loss. Erinna had never become a part of her life.

Before Sappho left Rhodes, however, she was still devastated by her disappointment. She was distressed by her own inadequacy; she had not known how to deal wisely with the situation. For the first time in her life, it was clear to her, or rather for the first time she looked this fact full in the face, that women were not as a rule attracted to her as quickly as she was to them. She resented her lack of beauty as she had resented it so long ago as a child, and she told herself, with ruthless irony, that she would always be an acquired taste even with those who loved her most.

Sappho was desolate as she set sail from Rhodes, and a great and empty loneliness took possession of her. She fiercely decided that work, work and more work should be her drug, which would help her to forget her apparent inability to find personal happiness. And yet, as she made this resolve, she was aware that, as an artist, she would never write anything worth while if she ran away from personal experiences. And perhaps unhappy experiences would, she thought bitterly, be more stimulating to her talents than happiness.

Sappho had proved this fact to herself by the farewell message she sent to Erinna before she left Rhodes.

In her mood of despair, she had written a love poem, which, when she re-read it, she knew was good—the best lines she had written.

One wonders, however, whether at the moment, involved with her own unhappy emotions as she was, she would have derived the slightest comfort from the knowledge that, for twenty-five hundred years, this poem has been considered one of the finest love lyrics ever written by any poet.

It is the only poem in Sappho's nine books which has been handed down to us entirely intact. In his work on *Literary Criticism*, Dionysius of Halicarnassus quoted this poem as a model of its kind and as an illustration of Sappho's " finished and brilliant style of composition."

No translation into any language can possibly do justice to this poem, but the English rendering in Sapphic metre, made by Edwin Arnold in 1869, gives at least some idea of the rhythmic quality of this song.

The satisfaction Sappho felt when she wrote these verses had ebbed away by the time she, Cleïs and Phœbe left Rhodes. As they made their way down to the harbour to go on board the ship for Mitylene, Phœbe glanced at her mistress anxiously. She was a simple soul, to whom poetry and art meant nothing, except that, for some reason or other, they were important to Sappho, and that she was proud of Sappho's fame. She was concerned only with

Sappho's personal happiness or unhappiness. And Sappho was sad.

Cleïs did not speak as they went down to the port. The child was learning never to make the mistake of showing Sappho affection when she was disturbed, and Sappho was grateful for this understanding.

Sappho had called the farewell message to Erinna: *To Aphrodite*:

> Aphrodite, splendour-throned immortal, wile-weaving child of Zeus, to thee is my prayer. Whelm not my heart, O Queen, with suffering and sorrow, but come hither I pray thee, if ever ere this thou hast heard and marked my voice afar, and stepping from thy father's house harnessed a golden chariot, and the strong pinions of thy two swans fair and swift, whirring from heaven through mid-sky, have drawn thee towards the dark earth, and lo! were there; and thou, blest lady, with a smile on that immortal face, didst gently ask what ailed me, and why I called, and what this wild heart would have done, and "Whom shall I make to give thee room in her heart's love, who is it, Sappho, that does thee wrong? for even if she flees thee, she shall soon pursue; if she will not take thy gifts, she yet shall give; and if she loves not, soon love she shall, whether or no;"
>
> O come to me now as you camest then, to assuage my sore trouble and do what my heart would fain have done, thyself my stay in battle.

The translation by Edwin Arnold:

> Splendour-throned Queen, immortal Aphrodite,
> Daughter of Jove, Enchantress, I implore thee
> Vex not my soul with agonies and anguish;
> Slay me not, Goddess!

Come in thy pity—come, if I have prayed thee;
Come at the cry of my sorrow; in the old times
Oft thou hast heard, and left thy father's heaven,
Left the gold houses,
Yoking thy chariot. Swiftly did the doves fly,
Swiftly they brought thee, waving plumes of wonder—
Waving their dark plumes all across the æther,
All down the azure.
Very soon they lighted. Then didst thou, Divine one,
Laugh a bright laugh from lips and eyes immortal,
Ask me, "What ailed me—wherefore out of heaven
Thus I had called thee?
What it was made me madden in my heart so?"
Question me, smiling—say to me, "My Sappho,
Who is it wrongs thee? Tell me who refuses
Thee, vainly sighing."
"Be it who it may be, he that flies shall follow;
He that rejects gifts, he shall bring thee many;
He that hates now shall love thee dearly, madly—
Aye, though thou wouldst not."
So once again come, Mistress; and releasing
Me from my sadness, give me what I sue for,
Grant me my prayer, and be as heretofore now
Friend and protectress.

CHAPTER SEVEN

PITTACUS himself came down to the harbour when Sappho returned to Mitylene. As the ship was being moored, she was amazed to see him among the crowd which had gathered to welcome her. There were many familiar faces—that is, familiar now that she actually saw them again. But most of the men and women who had come to see her were really strangers. She had not given them a single thought while she had been away. Nor had they, she realised, not without cynicism, remembered her until she became famous, a Mitylenian whom it was flattering to know. When she was in disgrace, before she went into exile, few of them had condescended to speak to her in the road or in the market-place.

She recognised her youngest brother, Larichos, as she prepared to go ashore. He was handsome, but she could see as she approached him that his chin was still weak, his carriage, though graceful, as indecisive as ever. She had heard that her brother Eurygyus was no longer in Lesbos, he had gone to Egypt as a merchant. As a matter of fact, she never saw him again.

As the group on the shore closed round her in gestures of welcome, she glanced about, vaguely hoping that Charaxus, wishing at last to forget their bitter differences, had joined her other friends. She herself would have been willing to forgive him. But he

was not there. Obviously, he had remained sulking in his home.

She did not go to the house where she had lived with Cercolas and where Alcæus had hidden and been arrested. She wanted an entirely new environment, a new life, and she had sent a message to Larichos, asking him to secure for her a temporary home.

He had found her a house among the fashionable villas along the shore, south of the town. Many of the people who had come to the harbour escorted her there. When the last of her guests had finally left and the echo of their voices seemed no longer to fill the room, she sank down in a chair and closed her eyes. The great stillness comforted her, but at the same time she realised that never had she been more alone.

She could hear nothing but the regular swishing of the waves against the beach. The sea, she felt, was her only constant companion; always, wherever she had been, she could see or hear it. To-night the rhythm of this sea round Lesbos exasperated her unreasonably. She closed her mouth firmly, called for Phœbe and ordered that her bedroom was to be got ready.

If she had hoped to recover some of her natural buoyancy by the next morning, she was disappointed. She did not doubt that in time—soon perhaps—she would forget Erinna, but she could not throw off the despondency which this experience had created in her.

Often she did not think of Erinna for days at a time,

and then, suddenly, she was overwhelmed by a feeling of infinite loss, a loss that was immeasurable in the literal sense of the word, because she would never know what Erinna might have meant to her.

Centuries later something of what Sappho must have gone through at this time was caught and described in four lines by a nineteenth-century poet, Emily Dickenson, who wrote:

> Each that we lose takes part of us;
> A crescent still abides,
> Which, like the moon, some turbid night,
> Is summoned by the tides.

Perhaps, had Sappho been continuously unhappy about Erinna, had her bitter disappointment tormented her with a sharp grief, she would have been less distressed than she was by her own coldness. Her inability to feel anything frightened her, and her thwarted longing for Erinna overshadowed all of life. Her senses, usually acutely aware of beauty, were numb. The fragrance of flowers seemed less sweet and the sweep of the hills in the distance behind Mitylene gave her no satisfaction.

Never, even when she was in her happiest moods, was she really optimistic. Always, except in rare moments of exaltation, there was one corner of her rational mind which reminded her of the essential futility of life; but usually, when she was busy or interested, she refused to listen to this reminder. Now she was haunted by a frightening feeling that life

had nothing more to offer her, that, somehow, she was at the end instead of the beginning of her career. At moments she longed to abandon the idea of her Academy, but she was determined to go on with her plans. She told herself sternly that she was only twenty-seven, that she had a responsibility towards her child and towards her own talent. She must go on.

She was quite aware that a passing love affair, no matter how trivial, would have helped to restore her spiritual vitality, helped her to acquire again a more positive and less defeatist attitude towards life. But she was not in the mood for any sort of intimacy, she stubbornly preferred to remain shut up within herself.

The emotional stimulus she needed finally came from quite another source. Anger at last aroused her from her apathy, awakened her fighting spirit, made her feel again that, after all, it was not only worth while, but necessary to go on living, in order that she might be the victor in the struggle which confronted her.

Her anger was directed against her brother Charaxus. Her increasing fame had not assuaged his antagonism towards her. On the contrary, when he heard her poetry discussed in laudatory terms, he was furiously jealous of her. Since their earliest childhood he had never ceased to think of her as his rival, she symbolised for him his own inability to make a success of his life.

He had always had a secret longing, an unhappy

love for what he called intellectual pursuits, and he somehow blamed her for the fact that he was only a merchant, and not a particularly efficient one at that. Besides, he had never forgotten that, years ago, one of his mistresses had found Sappho more attractive than him; and now, whenever a woman refused him—which happened frequently—his bitterness towards his sister increased.

Charaxus did not like to know that Sappho was in Mitylene; he had tried to prolong her exile indefinitely. He made a futile effort to prejudice Pittacus against her, but when he broached the subject, the old man reproved him sharply.

Pittacus knew that Charaxus, Sappho's own brother, had sent the guards to her house in search of Alcæus. Pittacus had been profoundly shocked and had looked with disfavour on Charaxus ever since. For this disapproval of those in power, Charaxus, of course, blamed Sappho too.

In fact, he had developed the irrational habit of attributing everything unpleasant in his life to her intervention.

As he was unable to harm her in official circles, he deliberately tried to undermine her reputation for personal integrity. She had written to Larichos telling him of her intention to open an Academy for girls. And Larichos, who felt himself to be weak and the inferior of most other men he met, liked to enhance his own importance by being the first to know and to

repeat any news. Everyone in Mitylene, including Charaxus, therefore, knew of her plans.

Charaxus' malicious mind turned at once on this project of the Academy. In the age in which he lived there were, as has been said, no religious or other prejudices against any of Eros's many versatile expressions; but, naturally, many men of all ages have, at heart, resented women like Sappho, who decreased their own importance. And Charaxus spread the gossip about Sappho's predilections among respectable fathers of eligible daughters in Mitylene.

Charaxus made these anxious parents feel that Sappho had some supernatural and sinister effect on young and defenceless girls, that she turned them against marriage and made them less desirable to wealthy young bridegrooms.

Charaxus was unable to influence intelligent parents of the enlightened sixth century B.C. against Sappho, and many of the less enlightened but educated Mitylenians distrusted her brother so profoundly, or felt such disgust for him because he had once betrayed her, that they were unwilling to believe the slanderous tales he was spreading about her before her return to Lesbos.

Charaxus had, however, confirmed in people's minds the fact that Sappho was not interested in men. This much, at any rate, of what he said was considered to be the truth. Besides, he had succeeded in creating an unfavourable attitude towards her among

the ordinary citizens, an attitude of curiosity bordering on disfavour.

"She was accused by some," a second-century papyrus reads, "of having been irregular in her way of life." And Ovid, writing in the century before Christ, asked "What lore did Sappho teach but how to love maidens?"—"*Lesbia quid docuit Sappho, nisi amare puellas?*"

Maximus of Tyre, who is most generally quoted in this connection, in his *Dissertations*, wrote with greater objectivity on the subject:

> The love of the fair Lesbian [he says] if it is right to argue from one age to another, was surely the same as the art of love pursued by Socrates. They both appear to me to have practised the same sort of friendship, he of males, she of females, both declaring that their beloved were many in number and that they were captivated by all beautiful persons. What Alcibiades, Charmides and Phædrus were to him, Gyrinna, Atthis and Anactoria were to her, and what his rival craftsmen Prodicus, Gorgias, Thrasymachus and Protagoras were to Socrates, that Gorgo and Andromeda were to Sappho, who sometimes takes them to task and at other refutes them and dissembles with them exactly like Socrates.

If it had occurred to Sappho that succeeding generations would pass moral judgments on her actions, she would undoubtedly have remained completely indifferent to such criticism. As it was, though her cynicism was increasing, she believed in the progress of humanity, and she could not

foretell that the time would come when her form of personal self-expression, sensitive and discriminating as it was in itself, would be censured to the extent of causing educated people to burn her poems.

Nor did Sappho care what the dull parents in the luxurious villas in Mityene thought about her, for they would not have sent their daughters to her Academy in any case.

Her brother's treachery enraged her, however, partly because any disloyalty, any human baseness revolted her, whether it was directed against herself or against anyone else. Disloyalty seemed to her not only mean and low, but bad taste as well, and she condemned bad taste of any kind as a vice. Besides, she wanted to think highly of human nature, and loathed having such illusions as she had left brutally destroyed.

Charaxus had roused her anger also because she had a highly developed sense of privacy—an exaggerated sense, perhaps—and she hated having her private affairs discussed by anyone. She could not bear to think that this brother, who was violently antagonistic towards her, and utterly out of sympathy with everything she did or said or wrote, who had been the cause of her second long exile, should have dared to discuss her most intimate concerns with total strangers.

Despite her rage, or perhaps because of it, she almost welcomed her brother's most recent treachery. For at last she was alive again, she was no longer

devoid of feeling, and this devastating anger was better than the dreary lifelessness which had made her seem spiritually dead for many weeks before.

Besides, her temper galvanised her into activity. She wanted to do something, and at once. And she was more firmly determined than before to organise her Academy. At moments she was vaguely troubled by the realisation that anger, an entirely negative and uncreative impulse, was driving her on; but this stimulus was better than none, and she doubted whether she would have had the strength to succeed unless this opposition had been placed in her way by Charaxus. For obstacles are stimulating even to men and women of genius.

First of all, she sat down and wrote a letter to her brother. We do not know how this message began, or how long it was, but one part—apparently the essential part—of this letter to Charaxus has been preserved:

". . . will give" are the last two words of the section which has been lost. Then she continued:

> If you hover about the notable rather than the good and noble, and bid your friends go their ways, and grieve me by saying in your swelling pride that I, forsooth, am become a reproach to you, at such things as these you may rejoice your heart. Feed your fill. For as for me, my mind is not so softly disposed to the anger of a child. But make no mistake in this; the snare never catches the bird. I know what was the depth of your knavery before, and of what sort is the foe I am opposed to. Be you better advised

then, and change your heart; for well I know that being of a gentle disposition I have the Gods on my side.

Sappho felt better when she had sent this letter. She was aware that Charaxus would always try to intrigue against her, she knew that she must remain potentially on the alert to guard herself against him; but for the time being she put this unpleasant creature out of her mind.

She turned her attention to her Academy. She went about the important business of finding a suitable house. She finally chose one—a large, white square house, on the hills behind the town. Not all the houses built at this time had windows at the front, but she had one large aperture built in the ground-floor room—a most unusual procedure—so that she had a view of the harbour below. The back of the house looked out upon the sloping hills, the cypress and oleander trees, a green expanse of grass.

The open courtyard in the centre of this house was very wide, spacious enough for her and her pupils to practise their dances. The columns supporting the second floor and surrounding the colonnade round this courtyard were plain. Sappho liked direct, simple lines, and her furniture was strikingly simple in an age which loved inlaid wood and ornate decorations.

Hers was not, however, the simplicity of rigid self-discipline or discomfort. That unpleasant fallacy, made so popular by the Church in later centuries, that anything which is painful must be good for human

beings, had not yet been preached. On the contrary, comfort and luxury and joy, the ability to be happy, were considered virtues by the ancient Greeks.

It would never have occurred to Sappho that many men and women living in later generations would consider it a virtue to be uncomfortable. She never gave up any luxury which she could possibly have. The shower-bath she installed in her house was of the newest and most modern kind: a pipe along the ceiling of the bathroom carried fresh water from a spring on the hill behind the house to a splendid stone bath.

Sappho was increasingly aware that without wealth her life would have been far more difficult. At any rate, it would have been entirely different. Unlike many people, especially artists, who have always had money, she never overlooked or under-estimated the economic factor.

"Wealth without worth," she once shrewdly declared, "is no harmless housemate; but the blending of the two is the top of fortune."

When she was older and more cynical, she wrote: "Gold is a child of Zeus; no moth nor worm devours it, and it overcomes the strongest of mortal hearts."

Sappho always believed in spending her money freely and easily, and she was extravagant when she furnished her Academy. Her living-rooms were quite as luxurious as her bathroom. Occasionally in her fragments there is a reflexion of the comforts of these rooms.

"I will set you reclining on soft cushions," she says, and in another fragment: "You shall lie on new cushions." One feels that there was not a rough corner, not an uncomfortable chair or couch in her house.

She gave considerable attention, as well, to her private apartments. The dressing-table in her bedroom was a source of pride to her. The hand-mirror with the Aphrodite handle was still the most conspicuous object on it, and the polished surface of the table was crowded with "costly and sweet-smelling oils," with rouge and with dyes and with every other cosmetic known at the time.

The luxurious equipment of Sappho's new home was widely discussed in Mitylene. Though Phœbe fiercely defended her mistress' privacy, the workmen who came in and out of the house while it was being rebuilt could not resist describing the elaborate fittings to their friends in the town. And these tales were passed on from one person who loved gossip to another. What these curious people chiefly resented was the apparent inconsistency in Sappho's taste.

She had the most complete outfit of cosmetics, they told each other reproachfully, and yet she had more chests containing parchment scrolls than any other woman in Mitylene. Was it right and proper that a woman who obviously cared so much about her appearance, should at the same time have a larger library than most men?

Sappho herself laughed when she heard that some of her fellow-citizens were puzzled about her; the doubts and wonderment of small-minded people always amused her.

When she was finally settled in her new house, she had more applications than she could accept from parents wanting to send their daughters to the Academy. She found that her brother had not in any way undermined the general interest in her school. Many parents came to see her, so she felt, merely because they were curious and wanted to see what she was like. They thought it would add to their social prestige if they could say that their daughters were at her Academy.

For some weeks Sappho patiently interviewed these fathers and mothers, but then, suddenly one day, she was bored with them; for, after all, the most stupid parents might have intelligent daughters, or the other way round. She thereupon decided that she would receive only the young women themselves, and then, if she thought that they would be good pupils, she sent for the parents and made the necessary arrangements.

In the course of a few months her *Academy of the Muses* was well established. Even before it had been officially opened, the Temple authorities had asked Sappho whether she and her pupils would conduct the processional dances for some of the religious festivals in Mitylene.

At night, in the open courtyard, Sappho supervised

the rehearsals of these religious dances. "Aphrodite's golden-shining handmaid," she once called one of her pupils, and another fragment reflects the solemnity with which these young women practised the various figures in these dances.

"The moon rose full, and as round an altar, stood the women . . .," Sappho wrote, and in another passage she says: "Around the fair moon the bright beauty of the stars is lost when her silver light illumines the world at its fullest."

The *Palatine Anthology* contains an anonymous verse to Sappho and her pupils:

> Come, ye daughters of Lesbos, trip it delicately into the whirling measure on your way to the shining precinct of the bull-faced Hera, and there take up the fair dance unto the Goddess with Sappho for your leader, golden lyre in hand. Happy ye in that delightsome round. Ye shall think, for sure, that ye are hearing some sweet hymn of Calliope herself.

Soon Sappho and her pupils were asked to officiate at wedding feasts as well as at religious festivals. Sappho's wedding poems were more real, more full of vitality than those she had written in Syracuse. It was easier for her to compose a song, and write the text, now that her music and her dance were actually performed by her own students.

Nothing she did remained theoretical or abstract; every line she wrote, every note she hummed to herself as she accompanied herself on the lyre, came to life, became almost a concrete object when she saw her

pupils bringing together the written word, the rhythm of the dance and the sound of the music.

> . . . and we maidens [she said in one of the wedding songs sung by the young women from her Academy] spend all the night at this door, singing of the love that is between thee, thrice happy bridegroom, and a bride whose breast is sweet as violets. But get thee up and go when the dawn shall come, and may great Hermes lead thy feet where thou shalt find just so much ill-luck as we shall see sleep to-night.

Sappho and her pupils stayed up late only when they were engaged to officiate at a wedding or when they were rehearsing. As a rule, strict hours were observed at the Academy. Regular hours, so Sappho was sure, were as essential to her as to her pupils' health. During the weeks of listlessness she had known when she first returned to Lesbos after her banishment, she had hated every new day, dreaded getting up and facing the realities, which weighed down upon her as soon as she had left her bed. Life at that time had often seemed intolerably monotonous and grey. It seemed to stretch out before her, endless, unchanging and dull. "Having never, methinks," she lamented, "found thee more irksome, O Peace. . . ."

Now, when her Academy had given her a reason for living, she found it easy to adhere strictly to the schedule of singing and dancing lessons she had prepared for her students; she was never late for the appointed hour when they read and discussed the

classics, or when she tried to tell the young women what writing poetry meant.

She soon found that this regular routine had restored her own mental balance, that the days were full of concentrated work, of settling small quarrels between the girls, of supervising the tutors who taught young Cleïs, and she had little time to be depressed. If, in one corner of her mind, life still seemed futile to her, she rarely had the leisure to contemplate this distressing realisation. For days at a time, in fact, she was too busy to be disturbed by melancholy thoughts. She could be very gay, and her low laughter made Phœbe look up from her work and smile. Sometimes, in a particularly happy mood, she would tell her pupils fantastic tales, like the one about the doorkeeper, "whose feet were seven fathoms long, and his sandals five hides to the pair—it took ten shoemakers to make them. . . ."

The wedding songs which she composed at this time, too, reflect her joyous mood. This one, for example:

Up with the rafters high,
Ho for the wedding.
Raise them high, ye joiners,
Ho for the wedding.
The bridegroom's as tall as Ares,
Ho for the wedding.
Far taller than a tall man,
Ho for the wedding.
Towering as the Lesbian poet
Ho for the wedding.
Over the poets of other lands,
Ho for the wedding.

Sappho made several discoveries the first summer and autumn she spent at her Academy, discoveries about Nature, which were, to her, exciting, and which were important to others because she was a poet. She discovered, for instance, the changing colours of the trees and the grass and the sea. She had always known about these changes, but now she felt them intensely. She loved the simple "whiteness of an egg," the "blue of hyacinths," the "delicacy of water."

Above all, at this period of her life, Sappho discovered the dawn. Early in the morning, when the sky was "shot with innumerable hues," when the "golden-sandalled Dawn had called," when "the golden-slippered Dawn had summoned her," she felt more hopeful than she had felt before. At this time of day she was, at moments, not only hopeful, but expectant; life was not, perhaps, over for her. Soon —next week, or next month, at any rate somewhere round the corner of existence—some glorious experience was awaiting her. No wonder, that in her gratitude for these confident moods she called the early hours of the day "the queenly dawn."

Often she would arise at dawn, go out on to the flat roof of her house, and sit for an hour gazing out across the hills beyond Mitylene. Then, when her pupils joined her, she would try to persuade them to go with her to the country. She had bought a little house amongst the hills, and in the spring, when, as she described it, "the many-garlanded earth puts on

her embroidery," she liked to be as far away as possible from the rush and restlessness of the town.

A spring spent in Mitylene, away from the country, seemed wasted, a gift from the gods not properly understood or used. At night, in the country, she would lie awake, listening to the "lovely-voiced harbinger of spring, the nightingale," as he "poured down a sweet shrill song from beneath his wings, when the sun God illumined the earth with his down-shed flame outspread. . . ."

Few of Sappho's students at the Academy were as fond of the country as she was. They liked the excitement of the town, they enjoyed going down to the market-place, where many of them met the young men to whom they dedicated the verse she taught them to write. And after a few days away from Mitylene, these girls frequently became restless, urging her to return to town.

In the fragment of one of Sappho's poems, a fragment preserved on a seventh-century manuscript, she described her pupils' insistent efforts to make her return to Mitylene with them. She wrote this poem years afterwards, looking back on the time, "long ago when her girlhood was still all flowers."

Apparently this poem was written in the form of a dialogue, and the section which has been kept is a little speech made to her by Atthis, a girl who came to the Academy later and to whom Sappho was devoted,

. . . Sappho [this fragment reads] if you come not forth

I will love you no more. O rise and shine upon us and set free your beloved strength from the bed, and then like a pure lily beside the spring hold aloof your Chian robe and wash you in the water. And Cleïs shall bring down from your presses saffron smock and purple robe; and let a mantle be put over you and crowned with a wreath of flowers tied about your head; and so come, sweet with all the beauty with which you make me mad. And do you, Praxinoa, roast us nuts, so that I may make the maidens a sweeter breakfast; for one of the Gods, child, has vouchsafed us a boon. This very day has Sappho, the fairest of all women, vowed that she will surely return unto Mitylene the dearest of all towns—return with us, the mother with her children.

* * * * * *

As this poem shows, Sappho's pupils were very fond of her. To her own surprise, however, during the first year she presided over her Academy, none of them awakened any but maternal emotions in her. Her experience with Erinna had been a greater shock than she had realised at the time.

"Towards you pretty ones this mind of mine can never change," she wrote affectionately; but when, as happened occasionally, one of her pupils became too obviously attentive to her, Sappho would reproach her gently.

"Foolish girl, do not try to bend a stubborn heart," she wrote to one of them.

In a way Sappho was relieved to find that, temporarily at least, she was apparently immune from emotional upheavals. She remembered how unhappy

Erinna had made her, and she did not wish to expose herself to such pain again.

Never had Sappho derived such intense satisfaction from her work as she did in her Academy. Whenever she contemplated her curiously detached and cool frame of mind, she was grateful. And yet she had nothing with which to reproach herself: she had not abandoned her resolve not to run away from life. But life, it seemed, had every intention of running away from her, leaving her unmoved. She did not mind, she was content.

"But," she once wrote at this time, and the implications of this *but* are tremendous, for one can almost hear her add: but though I am not leading a full personal life—"but I have received true prosperity from the golden Muses, and when I die I shall not be forgot."

Two or three years after Sappho had founded her Academy in Mitylene, this institution had become very well known. The pupils who returned to their homes spoke in glowing terms of the education she had given them, and girls from the neighbouring islands and from Asia Minor soon began to come to Lesbos to study with her.

She called the pupils at her school her *hetæræ*; but it should be remembered that at this time the word did not yet mean a professional courtesan. A *hetæra* was simply an "intimate friend" or companion. As

Athenæus writes, " Freeborn women to this day, and girls, call their intimates and friends hetæræ or companions, as Sappho does in this passage." (The passage to which he refers has not been preserved.)

The arrival of students from abroad made life at the Academy more complicated. The Mitylenian girls had known each other since their earliest childhood, and there was rarely romance or glamour for them in their friendships. These strangers, on the other hand, many of whom spoke a different dialect, seemed romantic by their very foreignness.

It was only natural, in a house where there were no restrictions, no prejudices against any attraction the girls may have felt for each other, that little dramas occurred daily. Jealousies, and occasionally real unhappiness, had to be dealt with by Sappho. Some of the girls needed comfort, others had to be taught greater unselfishness and consideration for others. Sappho often smiled to herself rather grimly: she had not foreseen that she would one day be called upon to exercise moral suasion, to teach anything but the arts.

She smiled even more grimly when, for the first time in years, she herself was personally interested in one of the pupils, Gongyla, a graceful, responsive creature, whose beauty made one forget that she was rather insignificant. She was an Ionian from Colophon, north of Ephesus, on the Asiatic mainland.

The girl was young and inexperienced, and she

was flattered to be singled out by Sappho from so many disciples. At home, in Colophon, her father and mother had ridiculed her efforts to write poetry, and Sappho's interest helped her to overcome the psychic injury they had inflicted upon her.

As a matter of fact, Sappho agreed with Gongyla's parents that her verse was not in any way distinguished, but she told her this so gradually and so gently that Gongyla was not hurt. Sappho emphasised to her, as she did to all her pupils, that it was something—a great deal, in fact—if one learned to understand good poetry, whether one wrote verses oneself or not, and Gongyla would undoubtedly acquire this critical sense.

The story of Sappho's love affair with Gongyla is best told in the older woman's poems, in her own words.

It is clear that, from the beginning, Sappho never took this affair very seriously. In the first poem, written before she spoke to Gongyla, she compares her wishes to those she felt as a child when her mother offered her some pretty object. This poem reflects Sappho's fears that again, as in the case of Erinna, she might, after all, be rejected:

> Oneiros, Dream-God [she wrote] O child of dark night who comes back when morning is nigh and sleep has now but a brief time upon our eyelids.—O sweet God, how dreadful the suffering and distress you point out to me if I should dare to keep apart fulfilment and longing. Still, I have the expectation that I shall have no portion in that

of which you speak, but, rather, if the Blessed Ones offer it, shall by no means not grasp the thing longed for. After all, when I was a child I should never have been so unintelligent as to turn my back on a pretty plaything my dear mother held out to me; and I pray that the Blessed Ones but give me now the chance to take what I yearn for, seeing that I have done them all such honour in my poems and dances.

Several weeks passed before Sappho, who rather enjoyed this atmosphere of suspense, finally wrote to Gongyla:

Come hither to-night [she said in this letter] I pray, my rosebud, Gongyla, and with your Lydian lyre; surely a desire of my heart hovers about your lovely self; for the sight of your very robe thrills me, and I rejoice that it is so. Once on a day, I too found fault with the Cyprus born. . . .

Apparently Gongyla responded at once to this letter, for Sappho wrote:

You are come; it is well; I was longing for you, and now you have made my heart to flame up and burn with love. Bless you, I say, thrice over, and not for just so long as you and I have been parted, but rather for ever.

Only a fragment of the poem Sappho wrote to Gongyla the next day still exists: ". . . Nay, I tell you, I prayed that night of ours might be made twice as long."

As the months passed, Sappho was increasingly contented. Her life with Gongyla gave her peace.

She did not feel for the girl the passionate attachment she had once hoped such a relationship would mean, but she was not, on the other hand, tormented by uncertainties or jealousies. Thoughts of Gongyla never interfered with her work or made her restless. She was never unhappy when the younger woman went away for hours at a time with the other pupils. Sappho loved her, she was in love with her, but her emotions remained strangely aloof. Gongyla was not a part of her.

Sappho felt that she had found a safe emotional harbour at last. She had not worked so well for years. She was calm, and her vitality was productively directed towards her writing and her teaching.

Then, quite unexpectedly, came a blow which shook her brutally out of this peaceful mood.

Timas, one of her most promising students, a girl from Phocæa, was taken suddenly ill. The girl lived only a few days afterwards. This was the first time that any of the pupils had died. Death had never before been a ghastly reality to the members of the Academy.

The days and nights before the funeral seemed to Sappho like a terrible nightmare. She stood for a long time before the statue of the Goddess Aphrodite in the courtyard, too stunned to think very clearly. The girl's death had reawakened her old sense of futility.

". . . and hanging on either side of the face " (of

Aphrodite), Sappho wrote later, remembering her mood the first night after the girl's tragic death, "the purple handkerchief which Timas sent for thee from Phocæa, a precious gift from a precious giver. . . ."

Sappho must, as well, have written a lament to Timas, for there is one fragment of two words to the child. The fragment reads "Little Timas. . . ." Sappho's epitaph to Timas has been handed down to us intact:

> This is the dust of Timas, who was received into Persephone's black chamber all unwed, and for whose death all her fair companions took knife and shore the lovely hair of their heads.

After the burial service, Sappho made an effort to restore the normal atmosphere of the school, to help overcome the unhappiness felt by the others, and to dispel the fear of death which loomed up and cast a shadow on everything they did. Sappho found it difficult to assume a cheerful manner, because, quite apart from her own sorrow, Timas' death had exerted a most curious psychological influence on her.

The harsh reminder of death, and of the ultimate end of all things, had blotted out her feeling for Gongyla completely. Her emotions for this girl had been associated in her mind with gaiety and laughter; they had not been strong or deeply rooted enough to survive this grief.

Gongyla was puzzled and hurt. She did not understand, for she had expected that Sappho would

turn to her for comfort, just as she herself had come at once to Sappho after the girl's death.

Sappho tried to tell Gongyla gently that she was too sad to think of love. She thought it kinder to allow Gongyla to think that her mood might pass, but she hoped that the young woman would be mature enough to realise that passion can never be revived once it has died.

Real friendship, Sappho had once explained to Gongyla, is tough and hardy and can survive the rudest shocks; but love is fragile and rarely recovers when once it has been disturbed.

Sappho, in one of her nine books, records in verse the conversation she had with Gongyla. The girl had apparently begged her not to say anything final, urging her to reconsider her decision.

> "Surely" [so Sappho quotes Gongyla as saying] "you cannot tell; or have your eyes seen a sign?"
>
> "They have," said I. "Hermes came to me in a dream, and I said—O Master, I am altogether undone; for by the blessed Goddess I swear to thee I care not so much any more that I am exalted unto prosperity, but a desire possesses me to die, and to behold the dewy lotus-bearing banks of Acheron. . . ."

Gongyla was quite unable to appreciate Sappho's complex nature. In her simple mind she believed that everyone she knew reacted just as she herself reacted to any given situation. She had no insight into the psychological conflicts of others. The world

of her imagination began and ended within herself. And she was very unhappy and deeply hurt.

Sappho was distressed. The thought that she had grieved this girl troubled her, and she observed with relief, several months after Timas' death, that Gongyla was at last attracted by one of the other girls in the Academy. Sappho had, of course, never doubted that Gongyla would forget her in time, but she was glad when the responsibility she felt for the younger woman was finally ended.

This experience, however, and Gongyla's utter lack of understanding, made Sappho believe that she would never find any lasting companionship among these girls who were so much younger than herself. They were immature not only in years, many of them would never really grow up, they would always be less highly developed human beings than she was herself. Most of them were, in fact, by temperament, incapable of growth beyond a certain point; the tentacles of their imagination could never reach to hers. Few of these students were outstanding personalities.

Intellectually, too, these girls were not her equals; but this, she supposed, was the lot of every teacher. Rarely had any of them given her an idea, much less an inspiration; for the inspiration she had experienced when she knew Gongyla was, of course, within herself. Any other charming girl could have given her as much.

Suddenly Sappho felt extremely tired. She was

tired of always giving, giving, and of answering questions. Sometimes she almost dreaded the hours during which she was forced to teach. Occasionally—and this made her feel ashamed—she was wearied by the adolescent mind. Most of the young women in the Academy were extremely serious. They were pursuing Ideas with a capital I, which most of the girls never caught up. They lacked humour, and rarely appreciated Sappho's caustic remarks. She longed to talk to men and women of her own age, instead of holding forth to her students. Her responsibility for them began to oppress her. She felt like the harassed captain of a ship, but, unlike a mariner, she never reached the shore, she was never off duty.

She knew that this mood would pass, but she admitted also that, until it did, she had no right to go on teaching. She must go away and have a complete change.

She was sure, furthermore, that this would be as good for Cleïs as it would be for herself. Her daughter, who was now almost fourteen, was growing fast. She was going to be tall—as tall as her grandmother Cleïs, perhaps—and she was very beautiful. She had inherited Cercolas' regular features and her grandmother's large dark eyes.

There was, however, a listlessness, a vague discontent about the girl: nothing seemed to arrest or hold her attention. She seemed indifferent, and she was one of the few students at the Academy who rarely

asked questions. Obviously she had no curiosity; she was not interested in life, except as it affected her own person.

Sappho had observed with a smile that Cleïs rarely responded to the attentions shown her by one or the other of her fellow-students. Actually, this was not a subject which really amused Sappho—her daughter's emotional future was one of the things that mattered to her seriously. Sappho hoped that, as Cleïs grew older, she would care for men, for a man; for she was sure that Cleïs would be happier married with a family and children. Life was simpler like that, of this Sappho was increasingly convinced.

Sappho felt a curious reserve about discussing this subject with Cleïs. They had become very shy of one another, and this troubled Sappho. She wanted her daughter to be free, an independent agent, to do as she liked; but Sappho had always expected and hoped that Cleïs would come to her for advice. Now the child discouraged the long, intimate talks they used to enjoy so much when she was younger. When Sappho sent for Cleïs and told her that they were going abroad, Cleïs merely nodded and asked when they were leaving. That was all.

The morning after Sappho had decided to leave, she called her pupils together and told them that she was planning to close the Academy for a year. She had not thought seriously about the destination of her journey, until they asked her where she was going.

But then she knew. Iadmon, a wealthy merchant in Samos, a keen patron of the arts, had often asked her to come and stay with him.

She told her pupils that she was going to Samos. No, she was not taking any of them with her, she said, smiling, and her manner was more gentle than her words. She was taking only Cleïs, and, of course, Phœbe.

Phœbe was already fussily preparing for the journey. She had often wondered why her mistress had not travelled more frequently. She found the young ladies at the Academy very trying; she preferred being alone with Sappho and Cleïs.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SAPPHO went to Samos in about the year 580 B.C. This fertile island, which was considerably smaller than Lesbos, was already a great commercial centre. Situated close to the mainland of Asia Minor, Samos was near the great continental trade routes, and the merchants of Samos carried on an extensive export and import trade with Black Sea ports, with Corinth and with Egypt.

Samos was famous for her powerful navy. She was feared by her enemies and respected by her allies. Her triremes, which were usually painted a bright red, and could be recognised from a long distance, were known far beyond the shores of the Ægean.

Many of the young men born on the island became sailors and fearless adventurers. They spent the greater part of their lives on the high seas far away from home. And when they returned they brought with them not only wealth and experience; they became expert tellers of tales. The Samians, through these mariners, had become a part of the great world. There is a story in Herodotus about a mariner from Samos named Colaios, who sailed for Egypt by way of Crete. When he reached the Libyan coast, a fierce gale rose, and his ship was forced to sail towards the west, along the North African coast. He finally reached Tartessus, a Phœnician town on the coast of

Spain, very near Gibraltar, and he was thus the first Greek to reach the Straits.

The city of Samos, in the south-east corner of the island, was directly opposite the Mycale peninsula. A channel of only about a mile in width separated the city from the Lydian mainland. Samos, one of the most important cities of the Ionian Confederacy, had a large harbour and great modern buildings. A few miles west of the city one of the largest temples to Hera known in the ancient world dominated the coast.

When Sappho arrived in Samos, she knew at once that she would like being there, that the atmosphere of success and hope and confidence which prevailed in the city would revive her drooping spirits. At home, in Mitylene, she often felt that Lesbos had already reached the summit of her civilisation, and that the future of the island was less secure.

In Samos, on the other hand, she had a curious but persistent feeling of expectancy: this city was not yet at the highest point of its development; great events, both of the mind and in the realm of politics, were still to come.

How amazed she would have been had she known that two infants, already born when she was in Samos, would leave an impression on history. She may have seen Polycrates, one of these children, who was later the tyrant of Samos, for she undoubtedly met his father, Aiakes, a wealthy merchant interested in the

arts, who befriended the foreigners who came to the island.

Sappho would have been more interested had she seen the other little boy who was to make Samos famous: Pythagoras, who developed mathematics into a science, was at this time about two years of age. Heracleitus later called him "of all men the most assiduous inquirer," and his persistent intellectual curiosity would have attracted Sappho quite as much as his theories about mathematics, philosophy or reincarnation.

For she had come to Samos to find companionship, though she was fully aware that consciously to seek companionship of the mind was almost as foolish as resolving to fall in love.

When she arrived at Iadmon's home, she was doomed to disappointment. Everything in this huge house was too luxurious to please her. None of the ornate furniture, none of the plentiful meals or the bathrooms were actually in doubtful taste, but existence in this household was too close to the point where life becomes effete, a rich pattern robbed of its innate vitality and meaning. Sappho herself had a genius for sensing when luxuries became over-abundant, and comforts so great that they strangled life.

It was difficult to be alone in Iadmon's house, and Sappho was miserable if she could not be entirely by herself for hours at a time. Her privacy was increasingly essential to her as she grew older. Here slaves

bobbed up unexpectedly in Iadmon's splendid library, offering to unroll the scrolls for her; in the bathroom a woman slave seemed to rise from the floor to help her out of the bath; in her bedroom a relay of slave-girls came to ask whether there was anything she wanted. Never, not for a moment of the day, was she unattended.

Finally Sappho appealed to Phœbe to help her, and she was only too glad to free her mistress from the unwanted attention of Iadmon's servants. Phœbe preferred looking after Sappho and Cleïs by herself. She resented any intrusion from strangers, for she had grown fiercely possessive of them both with the years, and could not bear to see anyone else doing anything for them.

Phœbe haughtily informed Iadmon's slaves that Sappho, her mistress, was a great writer and needed solitude. The faithful slave, much to Sappho's amusement, always assumed the airs which, so she believed, famous authors should assume. The fact that Sappho herself had no affectations and never posed did not deter Phœbe from this attitude. Someone, she felt, must uphold the family dignity.

Iadmon was a stoutish little man of about fifty-five, always exquisitely groomed, who tried to make what little hair he had left cover as much of his skull as possible. His baldness was a source of real unhappiness to him. His slightly pompous manner sometimes reminded Sappho of Stesichorus, but Iadmon's

pompousness was pathetic because it was based so entirely on a feeling of his own inadequacy. All his life he had wanted, above all, to be attractive to women, but for years he consistently pretended to himself that his chief interests were the arts and literature.

He was one of those persistent dilettantes, who spend years of their life on a great book which is never written. His friends had got into the habit of asking him how this work—a philosophical treatise—was progressing, and he would reply quite seriously that he was in a good or bad mood for writing, as the case might be. Obviously, he had made himself believe that one day this book would be completed and that he would impress the world with his new ideas.

In the meanwhile, as for years he went through the gestures of authorship, Iadmon held open house. He presided at what later centuries would have called a *salon*. After the *symposium*, attended by his more intimate friends, many guests came to spend the evening at his hospitable home.

There was a great deal of talk about art at these gatherings, though many of Iadmon's guests knew nothing about the subject, and beauty as such had never entered their lives. There were many theoretical discussions as to why, for instance, the art of poetry was so much more highly developed in Greece than was sculpture; but these conversations, too, so

Sappho felt, were insincere, merely the patter picked up by idlers, who had listened occasionally to the opinions of people who knew what they were talking about.

At first Sappho was disgusted, wondering why on earth she had come to Samos; but she soon found that, actually, there were two kinds of men and women who came to Iadmon's house: those who sat about chatting, and those who talked less and worked hard.

Rhœcus, the most famous Greek sculptor and architect of the age, was a native of Samos and came often to Iadmon's house. He was then an old man, and most of his plans and designs were already being carried out by his two sons Theodoros and Telekles, who were his successors.

Rhœcus, who had built the great temple to Hera in Samos, looked back with satisfaction on his architectural achievements. Whenever he walked along the shore and looked up at the temple, he sighed with satisfaction, for he knew that this was good. But he had never been satisfied with his sculpture, and while the younger people discussed the reasons for the advance of literature, he had been searching in vain all his life for some method to make the figures he cut in stone or made in bronze more life-like, more real and more convincing.

Rhœcus searched in vain. No piece of sculpture has as yet been discovered by archæologists which is

definitely known to have been his work; but all the statues of this period are stiff and primitive, and of no merit as compared with the products of the great period of Greek classical sculpture which was to follow.

Sappho admired old Rhœcus because he had conceived of the idea of one of the most magnificent temples ever built, and she respected him because, with untiring efforts, he had transmuted his magnificent design into concrete form. The old man appealed to her chiefly because she felt that he, like herself, was a searcher. He wondered about everything; he had never ceased to ask himself why and whence and from where.

He himself took her to see the Temple of Hera. They walked along the beach together on a windy autumn day, her *chiton* fluttering slightly in the breeze. Rhœcus talked about the Goddess, who, so he and other Samians firmly believed, had been born in Samos. She was their patron Deity, as Athena was the patron Goddess in Athens. Hera, who, so it was said, had been born and married on this island, presided over agriculture and war in Samos, while in other parts of the Empire she was worshipped chiefly as the Goddess of marriage and of women.

Ever since, as a very young child, Sappho first read the *Iliad*, she had been puzzled by the fact that Hera, of all the goddesses, should have been chosen as the patroness of marriage and of women. How could any-

one, Sappho wondered, who knew Aphrodite, worship Hera. For Sappho hated quarrels of any sort—in fact, she never quarrelled—and Hera was unsympathetic to her because she was always being jealous and arguing with Zeus, her somewhat difficult husband. Hera was continually nagging him about something or other, and as a child Sappho had often thought how right he was to leave their home as often as he could. For, despite Hera's girdle, which gave her "the charm of love and loving, and which subdued all the hearts of the immortal gods and of mortal men," she never seemed able to keep Zeus at home. Besides, Sappho objected to the Goddess's meekness when occasion demanded.

One passage in the *Iliad* had made a particularly vivid impression on Sappho's mind when she was a child, and this impression had persisted when she was older and hated authority of any kind, especially her Uncle Eurygyus'. In secret she almost despised Hera for allowing anyone to speak to her as Zeus spoke to her: "Sit then quietly and obey my commands," Zeus had commanded. "Otherwise all the other immortals in Olympus will hardly protect thee, when I come near, and whenever I lay my invincible hands upon thee."—"Thus he spake," the text continued, and then "majestic-looking Hera was afraid, and sat silent curbing her stubborn soul."

Sappho was thinking of this passage as she walked along the shore beside Rhœcus. She glanced up at

him once or twice. His eyes were shining as he spoke of Hera, and Sappho suddenly realised that this enlightened old man was deeply religious—that is to say, he derived a personal comfort from his faith in the gods. His declining years were obviously being made easier because he was convinced that the gods, an outside Force, were directing his destiny. And when he was younger, Sappho was sure, he had been able to cope with the griefs and disappointments of life because he believed this suffering was the will of the gods. Sappho herself had never understood why human beings should find unhappiness easier to bear merely because the gods had chosen to inflict it. She could not see that the source of a wound made it any less painful, for she was not, essentially, a religious person. Had she been born into a later age, she would have found it extremely difficult to adjust herself to that peculiar attitude of passive, weak submission taught by the Church.

Since Sappho's earliest childhood, in fact, when her father was killed in the war against Athens, she had never, in her heart, been really fond of the gods. She did not like human beings who inflicted cruelty, so why should she condone such actions from the deities? And when, for instance, she had been unhappy about Erinna, and had written her fervent plea to Aphrodite, she had never really hoped or believed that the Goddess would do anything to help her. Nor did she.

Sappho was never an atheist. She did not, like Diagoras, who lived half a century later, "disparage the mysteries," but she differed from many of her contemporaries in that she was never frightened of the gods. In none of her known poems does she try to ingratiate herself with them, to propitiate them, or promise them this or that—as the "averting poems" did—if they, in turn, gave her what she wanted. Sappho showed as much human dignity and pride in her relations to the gods as she did in her relationships with human beings.

Sappho never "disparaged the mysteries," chiefly because she loved them and wanted them to be preserved. She loved the dances at religious festivals, the rituals of the worship of the gods, the atmosphere of the temples. She loved these religious services and observances in themselves; they pleased her æsthetic sense. The beautiful little image of Aphrodite in the niche in the hallway of her Academy in Mitylene gave her pleasure every time she passed it. The over-tones of life were more real to her, more closely present, when she, among many, was doing homage to the gods.

Besides—and she was very conscious of this fact, as she and Rhœcus approached the Temple of Hera—without the gods her own life would be unthinkable. Her passion for creating beautiful dances would be utterly frustrated, her poetry and her music would be restricted. Her work and her self-expression had

always, of course, been so closely associated with the religious beliefs of her age that she could not conceive of dancing, for instance, as an end in itself.

Yes, she decided, yes, definitely she was grateful to the gods, though she could not love them. Nor did she believe that they were entirely responsible for all the joys and the sufferings of mankind. She knew that she herself, her own nature, had directed her actions, and thus brought about her happiness and her sorrows.

Sappho was very quiet as she and Rhœcus turned left on the well-built road which led up the hill to the Temple. He asked her of what she was thinking.

She hesitated for a moment. She had no wish to hurt this kind old man, to let him know that she had been wondering about the gods, wondering how far their power went. Then she spoke, and he was sure that never in his life had he heard a more beautiful voice.

She told him quite truthfully that she had been thinking of that passage in the *Odyssey* when "Poseidon had gone among the far-off Ethiopians," but the "other gods were gathered together in the halls of the Olympian Zeus." And then Zeus said to the Immortals:

"Look you now, how ready mortals are to blame the gods. It is from us, they say, that evils come, but they even of themselves, through their own blind folly, have sorrows beyond that which is ordained. . . ."

* * * * * *

Iadmon's household interested Sappho quite as much as did his friends. His wife, an elderly, fussy woman, who had borne him many children and had never read a scroll, had been successfully relegated to the women's quarters of the vast house. Here, like so many women who are essentially dull and who spend their lives thinking that they have been misunderstood, particularly by their own husbands, she enjoyed her misery. She rarely appeared, never came to Iadmon's receptions, and was a mere shadow of a wife.

Iadmon's children, too, were commonplace; but he had one grandson, a lad of about eighteen, who was alert, and very obviously amused at the artists and would-be artists who flocked to his grandfather's house. At first Sappho noticed this youth because of his extraordinary beauty, and then, when she had been in Samos for some weeks, she watched him more closely, for it was quite clear to everyone that he was falling seriously in love with Cleïs.

Naturally, Sappho, being a wise mother, pretended not to notice that the two young people were constantly together, but whenever she could do so without their knowing, she arranged for them to see each other. She approved of Cleïs' friendship with young Iadmon; she had often worried because the girl was so continuously in the company of women. If Cercolas had lived, if Cleïs had known a father's as well as a mother's influence, this might have been better for her.

Besides, Cleïs' friendship for this boy near her own age caused her to pay less attention to the ultra-sophisticated life, the little intrigues, in Iadmon's luxurious home. None of the guests in his house seemed to wake up twice in the same bedroom, and Sappho was considered odd because she was living alone. Iadmon and his drinking-companions often discussed her when they talked without restraint, towards the end of their gay *symposium*, in the evening. It was inconceivable to them that the type of promiscuity they all enjoyed could make Sappho or anyone wish to be alone.

Sappho was not eager to have Cleïs notice, and much less did she wish her to take part in the indiscriminating intimacies in her host's villa. She wanted the girl to retain her romantic illusions as long as she possibly could. When she was older she could choose for herself what sort of existence she wished to lead, but at least, so Sappho was determined, she should always be able to look back with pleasure on a time in her youth when she believed in the delicate overtones of human emotions, when sensuality was not all-important, as it was to Iadmon and his friends.

In so far as she could, Sappho herself ignored the gossip each of the guests relished spreading about the others; she was not interested in their amusements, and their quick succession of love affairs was a matter of indifference to her. There were too many vital things to talk about and to see in Samos. She

preferred Iadmon's magnificent gardens, for instance, to any of his guests.

Among all the islands in the Ægean, Samos was most famous for her flowers, and never had Sappho known such a wealth of roses, her favourite flower. "Sappho loves the rose," so Philostratus mentions in his *Letters*, "and always crowns it with a meed of praise, likening beautiful maidens to it; and she compares it to the bared fore-arms of the graces."

She must have written many lines in which flowers are mentioned, for increasingly, as she grew older, a lovely garden, the fresh green of a hillside, gave her peace and comfort. In the summer of 1937, on a piece of Egyptian pottery, one of these odes was discovered:

> . . . enchanting is the apple grove; the altars smoking on the height, and the fresh brook murmuring amid the branches, and in the silence the whole enclosure is shaded by roses and there spreads through the rustling of the leaves a divine lethargy.
>
> The smiling meadow is in flower, beneath the blossoming branches of the oaks breathes the suave perfume of the hills. . . .
>
> Come then, with thy crowns, O Aphrodite, and pour gently into our cups the nectar mixed with joy.

Occasionally, however, when the sun was very hot and the heavy fragrance from the many flowers was too overpowering, Sappho thought that, in Samos, Nature was too abundant, too perfect, too rich. There were

moments when she longed to see a weed, some imperfection in the scene about her, which would have made it all seem more real and more life-like.

Iadmon was flattered when Sappho praised his gardens. He was so innately dissatisfied with himself that he took an inordinate pride in his possessions; they seemed to enhance his own value, to increase his self-respect.

The chief source of his artificial self-esteem was his ownership of two slaves, for whom he was repeatedly offered large sums by envious friends, and who were already well known on the island of Samos.

The question has sometimes been raised in this connection how a woman as sensitive and as humane as Sappho could have borne the idea of slavery, the subjection of one group of human beings to the arbitrary will of another, without taking a stand against it.

"Some people," as Sir R. W. Livingstone expresses this point in his essays on *Greek Ideals and Modern Life*, "put the Greeks out of court because they owned slaves."

Naturally, such a judgment of Sappho or of any other Greek is quite illogical, for, apart from the fact that few artists are at the same time social reformers, slavery was as much a part of Sappho's age as the frequent exploitation of industrial labour is a part of our own, and it would be as sensible to wonder how poets can continue to write verse in the

twentieth century when many miners of South Wales are living in abject poverty.

> It is hard [as Livingstone says] to understand the logic of these arguments. Does it mean that the character of Socrates, the ideals of Plato and the Stoics, the genius of Homer or Æschylus or Aristotle are meaningless, because they lived in a slave-owning society? That is clearly not true. Or is it suggested that a society in which bad institutions exist has no message for posterity? If so, we must cease to read Shelley or Wordsworth because the labour of children working sixteen hours a day in factory and mine entered into the coal that they burnt and the clothes that they wore; we must reject the virtues of every epoch—including our own—because they co-existed with institutions and customs in which succeeding ages find much to reform. Or does it mean that the peculiar virtues of the Greeks could only exist in slave-owning society, and that therefore they can have no value for us? That also is untrue. The leisure which the Greeks owed to servile labour is made possible for us by technology. The machine has replaced the slave, and if we were fortunate enough to produce a Plato or an Aristotle, they could live in this modern world, without slaves and with infinitely more comfort, the lives which they led in Athens. We do not avert our eyes from Washington or Jefferson or Alexander Hamilton because (in the eighteenth century after Christ) they kept slaves. We need not be severer to the Greeks.

Iadmon's two famous slaves were a man, Æsop, already widely quoted for his unfailing and biting wit, and a woman, Doricha, generally called "Rhodopis," the "one like a rose," whose fair hair and skin

made her beauty conspicuous in a country where most people were dark-skinned and black-haired.

Though Iadmon was aware that many Samians envied him the possession of these two slaves, he would undoubtedly have been staggered had he known how famous they would one day become.

One can imagine him rubbing his nearly bald head and staring into space with amazement, had he been able to see into the future and to know that the stories told casually by his slave Æsop would be written down not only in Greek, but in every language of the civilised world, and that these tales would be as widely read, or more so, than the great works of Homer.

Iadmon would have been surprised, though less so, as he himself was only too familiar with Rhodopis' charms, had he known that a distinguished historian, Herodotus, and a famous writer of epigrams, Poseidippus, would immortalise Rhodopis in their writings, and that he, Iadmon, would be remembered and mentioned by future generations only because he had been the owner of these two slaves.

". . . Rhodopis, the courtesan of whom we are speaking," Herodotus wrote, " became so famous as to be a household word throughout the Greek world."

In his *Æsopia*, Poseidippus, who refers to the life of Rhodopis after she went to Naucratis in Egypt, where she lived with Sappho's brother, Charaxus, says :

'Tis but your bones they adorn now, Doricha, that band for your dainty hair, that spice-breathing mantle you wrapped the fair Charaxus in, to lie breast to breast with you till 'twas time for the morning cup . . . happy your name, which Naucratis thus will keep for her own so long as sea-going ships sail upon the shallows of the Nile.

Despite Rhodopis' exotic beauty, she did not appeal to Sappho in the least. She was too brazenly, as we should realistically express this to-day, out for the main chance. Her efforts to get what she wanted were, so Sappho thought, too obvious and never subtle. Sappho was shocked by the woman's lack of artistry.

Rhodopis' imperious manner, combined with great physical charm and a sure instinct which told her when to be arrogant and when appealing, had won for her a dominating position in any household where she had been a slave, and Iadmon was completely under her influence. By nature cunning, she had learned how to deal cleverly with Iadmon, who was as afraid of her as though she had been a domineering wife instead of his possession, a creature whom he could sell at will.

Rhodopis was sure that the world owed her a comfortable living. She believed in taking always, and never giving when she could possibly avoid doing so. There was something mean and cruel about her nature, too, as Sappho realised when she saw how ruthlessly this beautiful creature exploited and abused the other slaves in Rhodopis' household.

Rhodopis, in turn, soon disliked Sappho. The slave had heard of the Lesbian woman's reputation; she also knew that Sappho was wealthy. Rhodopis thought, therefore, that the arrival of the guest from Mitylene might eventually cause an increase in her savings, with which she hoped one day to buy her freedom from Iadmon.

Rhodopis was, however, to be disappointed as far as Sappho was concerned. Her insinuating attentions to Sappho were emphatically rejected, and the slave's antipathy to Sappho turned into bitter hatred. Rhodopis resolved to avenge herself on Sappho for this rebuff.

Sappho was as much attracted by the personality of Æsop as she was repelled by Rhodopis. This little, misshapen man was so hideous, his stuttering speech so distressing, that when Sappho first saw him in Iadmon's house she found him repulsive, but when she had talked to him for a little while, the charm of his personality made her forget his ugliness.

"He was deformed to the highest degree," Sir Roger L'Estrange, Æsop's seventeenth-century biographer described him, "flat-nosed, hunch-backed, bladder-lipped and baker-legged. . . . His complexion was so swarthy that he took his very name from it, for Æsop is the same with Ethiop."

On a papyrus of the second century of our era, when it was still apparently accepted as a fact that Sappho and Æsop knew each other and were friends,

their smallness is compared. ". . . her stature is of the smallest," one can read on this papyrus, "as indeed was the case of Æsop who was less than . . ." Here the writing breaks off.

Sappho was prejudiced in Æsop's favour before she met him, because the story of one of his escapades, which Iadmon had told her with great pride, had made her laugh. And there is no better introduction to any human being than laughter.

This was the story: when Æsop, with many other slaves, was being led to the slave-market at Ephesus, where Iadmon bought him, each of the men was given a burden to carry on the journey, which, of course, was made on foot. The overseer sent to accompany these slaves was not unkindly, and he allowed them to choose which bundle or bale they would lift to their shoulders and carry along the road.

With clumsy fingers, Æsop, who, because of his deformity, was much weaker than the other men, felt the various bundles lying in a heap on the road. Finally he saw an enormous basket of bread standing beside the other things. There was enough bread to provide food for the slaves and the overseer during the journey, and this basket was undoubtedly immeasurably heavier than any of the other parcels before him.

To the astonishment of his fellow slaves, Æsop, with a painful effort, lifted this staggering load to his misshapen shoulders. Some of the other slaves tried

to help him, but he haughtily rejected their offer of assistance. Several times during the first few hours of the march he was so weak that he seemed to be collapsing. Each time, however, he clenched his teeth, steadied the heavy basket on his shoulders and trudged on.

The hour for the first meal came, several loaves were removed from his basket, his load was lighter. By the second day he was able to balance the basket easily on his shoulders, and towards the end of the journey, when the others were feeling the effects of fatigue from carrying their burdens, which seemed to grow heavier, he was rid of his bundle and walked gaily forward. He preferred to get the worst of his task over at the beginning. He had used his head, and the overseer's account of Æsop's cleverness prompted Iadmon to buy him at once in the slave-market.

In many ways Iadmon was a good host, but he had never learned how to deal wisely with his slaves. Iadmon's sensitiveness did not go as far as that. He wanted to show Æsop to Sappho, and, instead of introducing him to her casually, he summoned the slave one day and told him that he was to have the great honour of conversing with the famous poet from Lesbos.

"On the contrary," Sappho said quickly, instinctively treating this man as her equal, "I want to talk to you. I have heard some of your stories."

Something in her manner put Æsop at his ease, but he was very shy. He was then a man of about forty. His ugliness had always caused women to avoid him, and therefore, to comfort himself, he pretended to himself that he did not like them. As a matter of fact, he was a little afraid of them, and he mistrusted them all profoundly. Besides, judging by the women he had known in the slaves' quarters, and the so-called ladies he had watched and listened to in the drawing-rooms of his wealthy owners, he considered women stupid, greedy and usually insincere.

Years before, in his early youth, Æsop had taught himself how to read and to write, and thereafter, in the darkness of the night, when his master and his friends and courtesans were in the other part of the house, Æsop would steal quietly into the room where the scrolls were kept, light a small pine-torch and read for hours.

He had read and greatly admired those of Sappho's poems of which Iadmon had a copy. Here was a woman, Æsop had said to himself, who seems to go to the heart of things, whose mind is not led astray by superficial values. And the fact that Sappho was not beautiful, that she was small as he was small, made Æsop feel that she was closer to him than she would have been had she been tall and stately.

Sappho wanted to be alone with Æsop. It was clear to her that Iadmon's presence disturbed him, not because Iadmon was the master and he was the

slave, but because he did not consider Iadmon as their intellectual equal. She smiled at Æsop, and he knew that she understood. Then she asked Iadmon to fetch her some of the lovely roses he had shown her that morning.

When Iadmon had gone, Æsop's self-consciousness left him. He felt as though he had known this woman with the shrewd yet kindly eyes for years.

"As a rule, you know," he said, "I have little use for women."

Sappho smiled and asked him why not, did he think them stupid?

He then answered her question in the form of a story.

When she knew Æsop better, that was one of the things she liked most about him: he never answered a question with a dry "yes" or "no," always his imagination leapt beyond these mere monosyllables, and he replied by telling her a fable. One never knew, talking to him, what he would say next.

On this occasion of their first conversation he implied that all women were like the "widow woman" who kept a Hen. This Hen, he said to Sappho, "laid an egg every morning. Thought the woman to herself: 'If I double my Hen's allowance of barley, she will lay twice a day.' So she tried her plan, and the Hen became so fat and sleek that she left off laying at all."

Sappho laughed and looked at Æsop with keen

admiration. The characters of both the woman and the Hen reflected his opinion of women.

When Æsop had learned to trust Sappho, they often discussed religion. He was the first militant atheist she had known. He denounced the Oracles, saying they did tremendous mischief to superstitious mankind; he hated the gods because they were all rich, a vested interest; he frankly considered it absurd that certain gods should be believed to rule more forcefully in one locality than another.

Sappho listened to him intently; his was an entirely new point of view. She explained to Æsop her own attitude towards religion, telling him frankly that he would never convert her entirely, that always she would find self-expression in writing songs to the gods, and that, for this reason, it would be impossible for her to desert them entirely.

She realised how unreservedly he must trust her when he so frankly discussed his unorthodox views, and she warned him against speaking openly about these things. No, she answered his unspoken question, with a cynicism equal to his own, he was not to be careful because the gods might be listening and punish him, but because some very mortal man might hear and persecute him.

Years later, Æsop was to pay the ultimate price for his unorthodox attitude towards religion. After an adventurous life—he had made himself a free man—he spent years at the court of Crœsus, who sent him on

a special mission to Delphi. Here, though he came as the messenger of so mighty a ruler, the priests of the temple attacked him for his blasphemy.

Æsop was tried by them and condemned to death. Led by the priests, he was forced to walk to one of the Phædrian precipices, from where he was thrown down to his death.

Afterwards the Delphians were frightened by what they had done, for a plague broke out shortly after Æsop's death. Money, so the Delphians thought, some gift, would propitiate the gods, and this reparation payment, curiously enough, was paid to Iadmon's grandson, the youth who had loved Cleïs when she and her mother were in Samos. The payment of this money did not, however, appease the conscience of the Delphians. For centuries in Delphi, when a plague broke out, the people spoke of "Æsop's Blood," for they realised that the gods never condoned or forgave the cruel death he suffered. Two hundred years after Æsop's death, a statue to him was put up in front of the statues of the seven Sages, for later generations of Delphians tried consistently to make amends for his murder.

When Sappho knew Æsop, no one thought of him as a future martyr. No one, in fact, thought much of him: he was there to amuse Iadmon and his guests. And these comfortable people, who had never known hardship, did not take his attacks on their own class seriously. When he hurled abuse at the

wealthy, they thought he was jesting. After all, he was only a slave, nothing he said really mattered.

Sappho never took Æsop's stories lightly. She realised that he was bitterly in earnest. Many of his fables made a profound and lasting impression on her. The infinite pathos of his story about the Wolf and the Lamb, who had dared disturb the water from which the Wolf wanted to drink, had moved her deeply. And the suffering of humanity throughout the ages, so it seemed to her, was contained in the Wolf's angry answer to the apologetic Lamb just before it was devoured.

" Well," replied the Wolf, and Æsop's voice shook as he told this tale—" well, if it was not you who disturbed the water, it was your father, and that is all the same; but it is no use trying to argue me out of my supper . . ." Then the Wolf ate the Lamb.

Sappho pointed out to Æsop that he was sometimes unjust to the rich, making them all appear wicked and cruel. She emphasised that, in the age in which they lived, the arts, music, poetry, and dancing, were practically the creation of wealthy men, who made it possible for many artists to exist.

Æsop would not listen to her arguments, and this at times annoyed her, for she wanted facts, she was a searcher after truth, and his prejudiced opinions seemed to her unworthy of his mind.

He responded by being more violent in his attitude than ever. And he told her many fables that were

not pathetic, like the story about the Wolf and the Lamb. In some of them he attacked the rich with such violence that Sappho was surprised at the tolerance of a man of Iadmon's type. She would have expected him to be so angry that he would sell Æsop at once. Actually, Iadmon did not understand what Æsop meant when, for instance, he told the tale about the Lion and the Cow, the Goat and the Sheep:

"Men say," Æsop began one evening, when Iadmon and his guests were sitting in the courtyard watching the setting sun, "that it is not good for a servant to eat plums with his lord; and to the poor it is not good to have partage and division with him which is rich and mighty.

"The Cow, the Goat and the Sheep went once a-hunting in the chase with a Lion, and they took a Hart. And when they came to have their part and share in it, the Lion said to them:

"'My Lords, I let you wit that the first part is mine, because I am your Lord; the second because I am stronger than ye be; the third because I ran more swift than ye did; and whosoever toucheth the fourth part, he shall be my mortal enemy.'

"And thus the Lion took for himself alone the Hart. And therefore this fable teacheth to all folk that the poor ought not to hold fellowship with the mighty. For the mighty man is never faithful to the poor."

When Æsop had finished telling this story, there

was a silence among Iadmon's guests, and Sappho thought for a moment that one or the other of them would be angry. But everyone laughed, and one of the men, a wealthy idler from Ephesus, congratulated Iadmon because he had such a clever slave.

On another occasion, one of Iadmon's visitors, a pretentious, conceited fool, was loudly airing his views about music. Suddenly Æsop lost patience and, in a sing-song voice, he began to recite a fable about a Vain Jackdaw:

"A Jackdaw," he said, "as vain and conceited as a Jackdaw could be, picked up the feathers which some Peacocks had shed, stuck them amongst his own, and despising his old companions, introduced himself with the greatest assurance into a flock of those beautiful birds. They, instantly detecting the intruder, stripped him of his borrowed plumes, and falling upon him with their beaks, sent him about his business. The unlucky Jackdaw, sorely punished and deeply sorrowing, betook himself to his former companions, and would have flocked with them again as if nothing had happened. But they, recollecting what airs he had given himself, drummed him out of their society, while one of those whom he had so lately despised, read him this lecture: 'Had you been contented with what nature made you, you would have escaped the chastisement of your betters and also the contempt of your equals.'"

This time, Sappho observed with amusement,

Iadmon and his guests—all but the one at whom Æsop had directed this fable—were quite willing to understand the slave. They roared with laughter, for they had wanted this stupid man to know what they thought of him. He left Iadmon's home the next day, hating his host and wishing that one day he could buy this impossible slave and teach him manners.

Sappho was yet to learn that Æsop could be a faithful friend.

She had noticed for some weeks that Cleïs seemed extremely preoccupied and absent-minded, as though she were expecting something to happen. In other words, as Sappho realised, her daughter must be falling in love. Sappho said nothing, but she was pleased, for she liked young Iadmon the more she saw of him.

Sappho experienced a very real shock, therefore, when Æsop, in great embarrassment, asked her one evening whether he could speak to her alone, and then stutteringly told her that Rhodopis was being very attentive to her daughter. He had overheard Rhodopis saying to her intimates among the other slaves that she would revenge herself properly for Sappho's rudeness, and by causing Cleïs to become indifferent to young Iadmon she had done so.

Æsop stopped talking abruptly when he had finished what he had to say. He always began a sentence with great hesitation and then ended it suddenly. Usually this habit reminded Sappho of a

water-tap which has been unexpectedly turned off, but now she was not interested in Æsop's idiosyncrasies.

She was more angry than she had been for years —her fury made her feel weak. The idea that her impressionable and romantic young daughter had been exposed to the crude advances of this woman enraged her. She was unable to speak.

This was the only time in Sappho's whole life when she felt the urge to inflict physical injury on another human being. She longed to rush into Rhodopis' apartments and strike her. Sappho was so quiet that Æsop was frightened; he wondered what she would do. He awkwardly brought her a cushion, although there were two in her chair.

What she finally did was to thank him and go quickly out into the garden. She remained alone for almost an hour. When she came back into the house she was very white under her rouge, but calmer. She had decided to do nothing—nothing, that is, except leave Samos as soon as she possibly could without rousing Cleïs' suspicions that she knew what had happened.

Sappho realised that if she remonstrated with the girl, or told her what Rhodopis was really like, the child's attachment to this woman might be increased: she would want to defend her. If, however, nothing was said, no painful discussion of the subject impressed itself on Cleïs' mind, the girl would, so Sappho was confident, forget Rhodopis after she had left the heavily scented atmosphere of Iadmon's home.

When Cleïs heard that they were returning to Mitylene, she retired to her room and wept. Sappho longed to go in and comfort her, to tell her that all things pass, especially love, but she pretended not to notice her daughter's distress. Later Cleïs was grateful to her mother, for her affair with Rhodopis was not one of the episodes in her life on which she looked back with any pride or pleasure.

Sappho had been in Samos for about five months. She had planned to remain away from Mitylene longer, but the length of her visit had never been discussed with Iadmon, and he did not think her sudden departure odd. He had hoped that she would stay much longer, but, in common with many people who aspire unsuccessfully to be poets, he thought that all poets must be very temperamental and change their minds frequently.

Sappho told Phœbe why they were leaving. She had been amazed that the slave had not known about Cleïs and Rhodopis, for as a rule little escaped Phœbe. Phœbe herself was heart-broken; she felt that she had failed Sappho, and she wept bitterly. She would not be comforted when Sappho assured her that it would take cleverer women than either herself or Phœbe to outwit a woman like Rhodopis. Phœbe stopped crying only when Sappho finally spoke to her firmly, telling her that Cleïs must never realise that they knew about Rhodopis.

Phœbe was instructed to pack in a leisurely fashion,

as though nothing unusual had happened, but to remember that a ship was leaving for Lesbos in a few days' time.

With a great effort—as this was, of course, expected of her—Sappho wrote a *pæan* to Hera, Samos' patroness, before they left the island. She would never have hurt the feelings of the Samians, who had shown her hospitality, by letting them know her private doubts about Hera's perfections.

This poem reflected her mood, her desire to return once more to the Academy, to a well-ordered, peaceful life in Mitylene:

> Make stand beside me in a dream, great Hera [she wrote], the beauteous shape that appeared in answer to the prayers of the famous kings of Atreus' seed when they had made an end of the overthrow of Troy. At first when they put forth hither from Scamander's swift flood, they could not win home, but ere that could be, were fain to make prayer to thee and to mighty Zeus and to Thyone's lovely child. So now pray I, O Lady, that of thy graces I may do again, as of old, things pure and beautiful among the maids of Mitylene, whom I have so often taught to dance and to sing upon the feast-days; and even as Atreus' seed by grace of thee and thy fellow-Gods did put out then from Ilium, so I beseech thee, Hera, aid thou at my prayer this homeward voyage of mine.

CHAPTER NINE

WHEN Sappho returned to Mitylene, she found that great changes had taken place in the city. Pittacus, who was now an old man, had retired, as he no longer felt equal to the task of governing Mitylene. The grateful citizens had given him a large estate on which to spend the last years of his life. And he had well deserved their gratitude, for peace was so deeply engrained in the city that there was no danger of social unrest or upheavals.

Reviewing in her mind the achievements of this old man, Sappho remembered with regret how bitterly, for a short time at least, she had attacked him in her youth. But she had paid for this mistake with her exiles; life had never missed a chance of making her pay for any of her mistakes.

She had no leisure or inclination, however, for morbid philosophising, for when she returned from Samos she had too much to do. The Academy had to be reopened, new students installed, friends and acquaintances who insisted on coming to see her had to be graciously received. Every day she was faced with trivial tasks which, despite their relative unimportance, had to be done. She must have felt as one feels in the twentieth century when one returns from a peaceful holiday and finds one's desk heaped with letters and telephone messages.

She had often found her fame irksome, but now the

attention showered upon her by her fellow-countrymen must have been more trying than it had formerly been. For she was generally acknowledged as the greatest living writer on love, and many people considered her a professional expert on this most delicate subject.

Young men and women frequently asked her advice in their silly love affairs, and, as Sappho was kind-hearted and sympathetic towards all young people, she did not like to refuse to see them. It took time and a great deal of tact to rid herself of these unwanted confidences.

It amused her to be sought out as a specialist, who knew about love, for she realised how inconsistent she was on this subject. She was so inconsistent, in fact, that eight hundred years after her death, Pausanias, in the second century of our own era, complained that ' on love, Sappho, the Lesbian, sang many things which do not agree with one another."

Besides, she herself had never succeeded in building up for herself any permanent human relationship. And she was honest enough to admit that, in fact, she had been a failure as far as love was concerned.

Actually, she was beginning to believe that love was the greatest illusion of all, a fairy tale which seemed true for a short time only. In some poem, not preserved for posterity, she must have expressed this sentiment, for Maximus of Tyre writes that

> Diotima says that love flourishes in prosperity, but dies in adversity; a sentiment which Sappho comprehends when

she calls love "bitter-sweet" and a "giver of pain." Socrates calls love the wizard, Sappho "the weaver of fiction."

Sappho herself would have been amazed at the romantic attitude her admirers in later centuries adopted towards her private life, and she would probably have agreed rather bitterly that she deserved the very bad verse Swinburne wrote about her in this connection twenty-four hundred years after her death:

> My blood was hot wan wine of love,
> And my song's sound the sound thereof,
> The sound of the delight of it.

Cleïs was not one of the young women who asked Sappho's advice about love. The girl had never mentioned Rhodopis to her mother. Cleïs was unusually silent, she preferred to be alone, and Sappho knew that she would have been indignant at any intrusion on the privacy of her thoughts about Iadmon's slave. In some twisted way, Sappho was sure, Cleïs blamed her mother for her unhappiness. Perhaps she was still resentful because Sappho had forced her to leave Samos.

During the weeks that followed, Sappho thought a great deal about her daughter. She was growing up into a likeable and very beautiful woman, but she was not in the least extraordinary. She had average intelligence, and that was all.

She saw and judged life in simple terms of black and white. She had no appreciation of the subtleties of

complex human relationships. She liked or disliked, loved or hated. She was happy or unhappy, not knowing that world of in-between, that world of conflicting emotions, of joy mixed with bitter pain or regrets, or sadness lightened somehow with a strange feeling of satisfaction.

For Cleïs' sake, Sappho was glad that this was so. Life would be simpler for the child if she confronted it squarely, in the centre of the road, and never saw round the corners—did not realise, in fact, that any corners existed. For Sappho's intense and possessive devotion to her daughter was stronger than any ambitions she may have harboured for the child's future. But now Sappho told herself frankly that, subconsciously, at least, she had always expected and hoped that Cleïs would grow up into an unusual person with some rare gift or talent. In common with most mothers, Sappho had had illusions about her child, and in common with many of them, she had been disappointed.

Sappho's protective affection for Cleïs grew even stronger when she saw her daughter more objectively and realised that Cleïs was like hundreds of other charming young girls on the island of Lesbos and elsewhere in the Greek Empire. For the first time Sappho wondered whether the environment of the Academy was best for the girl. As many of the students were very clever young women, and some were talented, Cleïs must often have felt inferior to them. And Sappho was determined that her

daughter was not to be handicapped by a sense of her own inadequacy.

Sappho decided that she would give Cleïs plenty of time to get over her infatuation for Rhodopis, and then suggest to her that she might take Phœbe with her and travel anywhere she liked. The thought of parting from Cleïs was painful in the extreme to Sappho, but she resolved, at whatever cost to herself, to give the child the freedom to live her own life.

Sappho did not think of this future separation from Cleïs in terms of maternal sacrifice or any of those *cliché* emotions which many mothers of all ages have enjoyed, and have pretended to hate. Sappho never dramatised herself or liked heroic gestures. She did the important things in her life simply and in a casual manner.

Her first task, obviously, was to help Cleïs to forget Rhodopis. The young girl continued to be depressed and irritable, and she was therefore difficult to approach. The other young women in the household, who, as members of the Academy, thought themselves grown up, and assumed sophisticated airs, had no patience with Cleïs' mournful desire for solitude. They thought her childish.

Sappho urged the older girls not to let Cleïs feel their amusement. Sappho smilingly reminded these students, who were actually only two or three years older than her daughter, that they, too, had once been young.

Sappho herself never once alluded to the girl's state of mind when they were together, but she felt that the time had come to do something about it. She sent little notes in verse to Cleïs, hoping that these would break through her stubborn reserve.

"No house," she once wrote when Cleïs' sad face had created a gloomy atmosphere all day—"no house that serves the Muse hath room, I wis, for grief; and so it ill beseemeth this."

On another occasion, when Cleïs lost her temper with one of the other pupils, Sappho must have been very firm in the note she sent to her daughter. One line has been preserved:

"When anger swells the heart, restrain the idly barking tongue."

Cleïs did not answer her mother's letters, and Sappho never knew whether they had made any impression on her or not, but in time she became calmer, and more natural. It was apparent that, whatever feelings had bound her to Rhodopis, she was getting over this infatuation. And yet Sappho was troubled about Cleïs. She seemed restrained beyond her years, somehow imprisoned within herself, and unable to discuss her problems or conflicts with anyone, least of all with her mother.

The old intimacy, rarely expressed in words or demonstrations of affection, but always there none the less, which had united Sappho and her daughter since her earliest childhood, was gone. Sappho was

terrified at the thought of losing Cleïs. Outwardly nothing had changed: their manner towards each other continued to reflect that very special consideration two people who belong together show each other in public. And the fact that on the surface everything was as it had been, made Sappho more acutely conscious of the growing emptiness of their relationship. It was like a husk, a lovely vase which had been cracked, though not broken, but would never again contain any flowers.

This situation was the more distressing for Sappho as, obviously, there was nothing she could do about it. She had never flinched before the fact that affection, once dying, can seldom be revived; but she had allowed herself to hope that Cleïs was merely going through a phase of adolescence, and that, when she recovered her balance and attained her maturity, the old understanding would be re-established between them.

Sappho discussed her anxieties about Cleïs with only one person, Anactoria, a student from Miletus, who was mature for her years and Sappho's devoted friend. Later Anactoria returned to her home and was married, but she had a greater gift for friendship than for love. She was tall and awkward in her movements, she rarely danced, but she was a keen musician and a very serious student. Sappho respected her absolute integrity, her discretion and her tact.

Anactoria, too, agreed that there was nothing to do

about Cleïs but wait. Sappho had always been aware of Cleïs' moods, but now she had become acutely sensitive to her daughter's frame of mind. At times, when Cleïs sat looking at her, she felt, or imagined, that the child disapproved of her. This was disconcerting, but Sappho was determined to live her own life, as long as she hurt no one, no matter what anyone, even her own child, thought of her.

As time passed, and Cleïs' moodiness did not improve, Sappho finally decided to send the child abroad for a change. One of her mother Cleïs' relatives, who lived on the island of Chios, had often invited Sappho and her daughter to come and stay. Cleïs was pleased when Sappho suggested this to her, and she went gladly. Sappho did not let the child know how this separation grieved her. She was sure that it was for the best, that only a geographical separation would save their affection and their understanding for each other. She did not know then that Cleïs would decide to stay with her aunt for several years, but she would not have minded, if only Cleïs came home her old self.

When Cleïs finally set sail for Chios, she was not accompanied by Phœbe, but by two other slaves. For Phœbe had absolutely refused to leave Sappho. For the first time in her life, Sappho was forced to remind Phœbe that she was a slave and that she must obey orders, for Cleïs could not go without her.

Phœbe quietly pointed out that others could look

after the girl just as well until she reached Chios, and that there her aunt would be responsible for her. Then Phœbe's face suddenly changed. Sappho looked at her in amazement: never until she looked into this familiar face, now so distorted with the agony of fear that Sappho would make her go, did Sappho realise the depths of the woman's devotion to her.

"If you make me go," Phœbe said, "of course I must go; but I'll throw myself overboard the first night."

Sappho knew that the slave meant what she said. Phœbe remained with Sappho.

Sappho's personal life, in the meantime, was taking on a curious turn. Though she was only thirty-three, she felt that she was growing old, that life was running away from her, that her fastidiousness had caused her to forgo many experiences which she might have enjoyed. And so, though her conscientious attention to every detail of her school never lagged, she gave much of her thought and attention during the first two or three years after her journey to Samos to what she herself later called "vagabond friendships" with several of the young women in her Academy.

None of these friendships made great emotional demands on Sappho, none of them moved her profoundly. On the contrary, these love affairs were cool and soothing, and yet stimulating in the extreme;

she remained detached. She was never hurt. She believed that she had attained that ideal state, ardently desired by so many men and women who love often and fully, when her lovers made life extremely pleasant for her, but yet were not able to cause her pain.

She must have written many poems to these girls, with whom for weeks or months, or longer, she was closely associated. Single lines of lost verses speak of "a sweet-voiced maiden," or "a most tender maiden gathering flowers," and one longer fragment is reminiscent of this period of her life. In this she uses the word "sweet-apple" as a term of endearment, just as Theocritus wrote three centuries later: "Of thee, my love, my sweet-apple, I sing."

> As the sweet-apple blushes at the end of the bough, the very end of the bough, which the gatherers overlooked, nay overlooked not but could not reach.

wrote Sappho, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti has paraphrased these lines:

> Like the sweet apple which reddens upon the topmost bough,
> A-top on the topmost twig—which the pluckers forgot somehow,—
> Forgot it not, nay, but got it not, for none could get it till now.

In a few of the existing lines dedicated to these "vagabond" friends, the girls' names are mentioned. There was "Hero of Gyara, the fleetly running maid," whom she "taught well," and Gorgo, whom Sappho soon found dull, of whom she wrote—as Swinburne paraphrased the literal translation:

> I am weary of thy words and soft strange ways.

Suidas also mentions two girls named Telesippa and Megara among Sappho's "companions and friends," but their names do not appear in any of the existing fragments.

A few of Sappho's students were reported by later writers to have been gifted, and teaching them must have given her a real sense of satisfaction. Damophyla of Pamphylia, on the south coast of Asia Minor, one of her pupils, was apparently in the first rank of Sappho's imitators, though no poems of hers have been preserved.

Philostratus, in his *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, calls Damophyla a "clever woman," and says that when she returned to Pamphylia after being educated in Mitylene, she "had girl companions like Sappho, and composed love-poems and hymns just as she did. The hymns to Artemis are her adaptations of her teacher's work, deriving ultimately from Sapphic originals."

Sappho seems to have been more attached to a girl named Mnasidica, whom she called Dica, than she was to any of the others. There was nothing in Sappho's attitude towards Dica of the potential passion she had felt for Erinna; she did not suffer any lasting unhappiness when Dica left Mitylene to return to her home. But there is a gentle tenderness in Sappho's fragmentary messages to this girl, who in some curious way reminded her of Erinna.

"Mnasidica," Sappho wrote once to her, "of fairer form than the dainty Gyrinno."

Another fragment reflects Sappho's light, delicate fondness for this attractive girl:

> . . . but do you, Dica, let your dainty fingers twine a wreath of anise-sprays and bind your lovely locks; for it may well be that the blessed Graces, too, are more apt to look with favour on that which is adorned with flowers, whereas they turn away from all that goes ungarlanded.

Naturally, as is the case in all institutions where many young people are dependent upon each other's company, there was often friction and jealousy in Sappho's Academy. Sometimes one or another of these students took themselves and their affairs too seriously, and Sappho was faced with the uncongenial task of untangling their real or imaginary difficulties.

She always remembered one particular quarrel between Gorgo and Damophyla. Gorgo, a self-centred, pretty girl, whose existence was entirely confined to the little interests affecting her own pleasures, always disliked Damophyla, who spoke in a deep voice and considered herself a great poet.

Sappho came upon them one day, when, forgetting how grown up they were, they stood clutching at each other's hair. Gorgo, who adored dramatising herself, took up a vase, and prepared, with a grand gesture, to hurl it at her enemy. Then she suddenly glanced at the vase more closely, saw that it was a very expensive one, put it down, and took up an earthenware jug with which to continue her dramatic presentation of a woman carried away by overwhelming rage.

Sappho sighed. This unreality of emotions in the younger generation often disturbed her. She would not have minded when they temporarily, or permanently, hated each other, if their hatred had been sincere and vital. But she was sure that their little bursts of rage were as trivial and meaningless as were their love affairs. They were, most of them, incapable of feeling anything deeply. They experienced only the superficial emotions, prompted by their own passing desires of the moment.

Sappho's critical attitude did not make her less fond of her students, and she was always sorry when the school broke up for the year and the older girls left her and went home for good. A second-century papyrus records a little speech she made to one group of girls who were leaving the Academy:

> And then I answered: "Gentle dames, how you will evermore remember till you be old, our life together in the heyday of youth. For many things did we then together both pure and beautiful. And now that you depart hence, love wrings my heart with very anguish.

Though few of Sappho's pupils ever became known as creative writers, they nevertheless made a great contribution to literature, for it was they who spread the knowledge of Sappho's poems throughout the Greek Empire. When they left Mitylene, they took with them copies of her poems, and in their distant homes they performed the song-dances she had taught them, thus perpetuating the music she had composed.

Without them, the fame of Sappho's writings might have been largely confined to Mitylene, or Lesbos, and posterity might never have heard of her.

One wonders whether she herself appreciated the function these departing students were going to perform. Her frank faith in her own work causes one to believe that she was conscious of her own great gifts. And this quiet self-assurance is reflected in her attitude towards other women poets who had opened Academies similar to her own on the island of Lesbos.

Sappho's chief rival, if this term can be used for two such unequal competitors, was a woman called Andromeda. She came from Pyrrha or some other small town on the island. She was a provincial who pretended to be a woman of the world, a second-rate poet who thought herself a genius and who blamed Sappho because she was not generally acknowledged as such. She had not the slightest conception of what art or literature meant, for she was obsessed by personal ambition.

Sappho, whose respect for good craftsmanship was one of her dominant characteristics, despised Andromeda's dilettantism, and she did not take the other woman's school seriously enough to bother about it. What Sappho could not bear, however, and what occasionally caused her to attack Andromeda, was her snobbishness. For snobbishness of any kind, especially when it affected poetry, roused Sappho to articulate indignation.

Lucian, the satirist, who lived in the second century A.D., well described pretentious and pseudo-intellectual women of Andromeda's type when he wrote in his *Paid Companions :*

> For ladies make a great point of having persons of education in their pay, to attend upon them and accompany them when they go abroad in their chairs, since there is nothing on which they pride themselves more than that it should be said that they are ladies of culture and learning and write poems almost as good as Sappho's.

Sappho did not know that by her contemptuous attitude towards Andromeda she was making an enemy for life ; it did not occur to her that a woman as insignificant as Andromeda could do her any real harm or much less hurt her.

Later, when Andromeda became her personal rival, when the one woman whom Sappho really loved left her and went to Andromeda, Sappho hated her and did not try to conceal her hatred.

It is surprising that Sappho's earlier disapproval of Andromeda, a disapproval which was impersonal and directed against the other woman's bad poetry, could have prompted her to write the lovely lines she dedicated to Andromeda.

> When you are dead [Sappho wrote to Andromeda] you will lie unremembered for evermore; for you have no part in the roses that come from Pieria; nay, obscure here, you will move obscure in the house of Death, and flit to and fro among such of the dead as have no fame.

* * * * * *

Actually, it was only rarely, when Andromeda publicly belittled Sappho's poetry or her methods of teaching at the Academy, that she was seriously irritated with this rival teacher in Mitylene.

For several years Sappho's life was, in fact, remarkably free from those petty annoyances which can cast such a cloud over the spirits of the biggest and most unusual individuals. Her brother Charaxus, from whom, on her return from Samos, she had expected some display of ill temper, had, much to her relief, left Lesbos and settled in the port of Naucratis, where, as Strabo records, " he traded in Lesbian wine."

Until the eighties of the last century, archæologists did not know just where this ancient town of Naucratis was situated, and the references to this place in connection with Sappho's brother were wrapped in that haze of uncertainty which made Charaxus' story, and thus her own, seem so far away that it appeared to be almost legendary.

In 1884, however, W. M. Flinders Petrie, who was exploring for the Egypt Exploration Fund, discovered the old site of this town under an Arab village on the Rosetta mouth of the Nile, about forty miles from the present sea-coast.

The age in which Sappho lived seems nearer our own when one contemplates how ancient was the civilisation of Egypt when she lived. When Charaxus settled in Naucratis it was twelve hundred years after the reign of that Pharaoh who had made Joseph of the

Old Testament his adviser. And when Abraham, years before Joseph, visited Egypt, the Sphynx was already a mystery.

Greek traders had gone to Naucratis about a century before Charaxus went there to trade in Lesbian wine. Athenæus mentions Greek merchants who settled in Lower Egypt in the twenty-third Olympiad, which would be about 688 B.C. At this time Pharaoh Psemetek, whom the Greeks called Psammetichos, a very enterprising man, encouraged these Greeks to carry on business in his country, and to make their homes in Naucratis.

This Psemetek is the Pharaoh mentioned by Jeremiah:

> Thus saith the Lord: Behold, I will give Pharaoh-hophra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies, and into the hand of them that seek his life; as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, his enemy, and that sought his life.
>
> "For centuries [as H. T. Wharton points out] Naucratis was the only city in Egypt in which the Greeks were permitted to settle and carry on commerce unmolested. Ionians, Dorians, Aeolians there united in a sort of Hanseatic League, with special representatives and a common sanctuary, the Panhellenion, which served as a tie among them. This rich colony remained in faithful connection with the mother-country, contributed to public works in Hellas, received political fugitives from that home as guests, and made life fair for them, as for its own children, after the Greek model. The women and flower-garlands of Naucratis were unsurpassed in beauty."

To protect their business interests, the Greeks living in Lower Egypt maintained mercenary troops, and the officers of this little army were known throughout the Greek world for their extravagance, their love of luxury and their admiration of attractive women. As a result, it was the ambition of many courtesans in Greece to go to Naucratis and have a great career.

Sappho had not, therefore, been astonished when she heard that Rhodopis had gone to Naucratis, for Iadmon had quarrelled with his beautiful slave and sold her to a man named Xanthes. Originally he had not intended to buy her. He was not particularly attracted to her or to any woman, but he had finally bought her because she had flattered him successfully. Xanthes took her to Naucratis.

Rhodopis had plenty of opportunity to be unfaithful to Xanthes; and she was never unfaithful to him, or temporarily faithful to anyone else, for pure pleasure. She was interested only in men with plenty of money. *L'art pour l'art* was not her guiding principle: instead she hoped, from her numerous lovers, to acquire sufficient wealth to buy her freedom from Xanthes. He was so extravagant in Naucratis, spending money chiefly on wine and banquets, that soon, she was sure, he would be hard up and glad to have the money she could give him in return for her freedom.

Then she met Charaxus, who, as a rule, adored respectability, and was extremely sensitive to what his fellow-merchants thought of him. As he grew older,

he was increasingly afraid—and with good reason—that he would appear a ridiculous figure. He lived in terror lest some woman would make a fool of him. More than anything else he hated having his neighbours make fun of him, which they did frequently because of his comic, pompous manner.

At first Rhodopis was not very responsive to Charaxus' advances. She knew that he was Sappho's brother, and it was tempting to exploit the brother of this woman she still fervently hated. Besides, Charaxus was extremely rich. Rhodopis hesitated, however, because she had social ambition, and a mere merchant did not seem very attractive when there were many smart army officers in Naucratis. She thought the matter over carefully, and then decided to become Charaxus' mistress, because, though the officers were socially more desirable, they were not quite as gullible as this Lesbian merchant, who was such a fool that he believed her when she promised to stay with him indefinitely.

Charaxus went farther than buying Rhodopis of Xanthes: he "set her free," as Herodotus tells us, and took a luxurious house for her in the most fashionable part of the town. Naturally, she soon left him, making him a laughing-stock in Naucratis, and his wounded vanity drove him back to Mitylene.

Rhodopis, in the meantime, as Herodotus tactfully says, without going into detail, "continued in Egypt," and "being very lovely, acquired great

riches " as an independent courtesan. When she was ageing, she longed in vain to see Greece before she died. She had obviously grown tired of Egypt and the army officers, for Herodotus concludes his account of her life by telling us that she was

> desirous of leaving a monument to herself in Greece, and having had such a work made as no one ever yet devised and dedicated in a temple, to offer it at Delphi as a memorial to herself: having therefore made from the tenth of her wealth a great number of iron spits for roasting oxen, as far as the tenth allowed, she sent them to Delphi; and they are still piled up behind the altar which the Chians dedicated, and opposite the temple itself.

When Sappho heard about her brother's affair with Rhodopis, the bitter resentment she had felt because of Cleïs towards this scheming woman was revived within her. She did not really care about her brother, he was old enough to look after himself, but she took Rhodopis' actions as an insult to her family, and she was furious. In one letter she called Rhodopis a " bitch," and this word has been politely and euphemistically translated by Professor Edmonds as a " she-dog."

Sappho could think of no man who must be more unattractive to women than her own brother, no man who could possibly be less satisfactory as a lover, and she could not help feeling a malicious joy at the thought of what Rhodopis must have gone through to get so much money from Charaxus. For Sappho

had a very vivid imagination, and, in common with many romantics, her imagination was not always the kind of which puritans approve.

A few lines of a letter she wrote to Charaxus at this time still exist:

> . . . O Cypris, may she find even thee too bitter, nor boast herself so loud, saying: "What a delightful love-match hath Doricha made this second time."

Despite Sappho's anger, her family pride was roused when she heard her friends and acquaintances in Mitylene laughing at Charaxus. Since her mother's death she had always considered herself, and not one of her brothers, as the head of the family, and as such she now rose in vigorous protest when Charaxus was attacked.

Many of the men she knew in Mitylene were merchants themselves and had been in Naucratis. Some of them, Sappho decided, must have known this famous courtesan themselves, or they would not have expressed such malicious joy when they spoke of Charaxus' escapade.

Besides, Sappho always tended to feel sorry for any one in adversity, and she found, much to her own surprise, that she was being slightly sentimental about Charaxus. She was suddenly more conscious of her memories of him as a small child in their mother's arms than she was of his unkindness to her.

When he returned to Mitylene, Herodotus, who was fascinated by this story, records that "she rated

him soundly," but she defended him to outsiders, and invented excuses for his foolish behaviour when his so-called friends, who had been sure that she would turn against him, tried to discuss his dilemma with her.

She resented the interference of busybodies in her family affairs, and she made her point of view clear in no uncertain terms. She wanted the Mitylenians to know that she had forgiven Charaxus. Before Charaxus returned to Lesbos, she wrote a poem for everyone to read. This is the literal translation:

> Golden Nerèids, grant me I pray my brother's safe return, and that the true desires of his heart shall be accomplished, and putting away his former errors he shall become a delight to his friends and a grief to his enemies; and may our house be disgraced of no man. And may he be willing to bring honour to his sister; and the sore pain and the words wherewith, in bitter resentment of a taunt that must have cut to the quick, he sought ere he departed to overwhelm my heart, —O, when return he does on some near day, may he choose amid his fellow-townsmen's mirth (at a feast of welcome) to cast them clean away, and to have a mate, if he desire one, in wedlock due and worthy; and as for thee, thou black and baleful she-dog, thou mayst set that evil snout to the ground and go a hunting other prey.

CHAPTER TEN

AS the day of Charaxus' return to Lesbos approached, Sappho was more and more annoyed with the whole affair. She was amused at the persistence of her own sentimental attitude towards her brother. This must, she thought, be the first sign of old age. And it was really ridiculous to try to help Charaxus for the sake of Cleïs, their mother: Cleïs herself would not have been sentimental about him, she would not have forgotten his unkindness towards Sappho, and she would have been the first to reprove Charaxus severely. Nevertheless, when Sappho thought of her mother, she could not bear the thought that her brother might be humiliated when he got home.

As she dressed to go down to the harbour where Charaxus' ship was expected hourly, she sighed, for she realised that he might regret his former meanness and try to be friendly with her for the rest of her life. This was a most unpleasant thought. It was tiresome enough to help him now that he was in trouble, but the prospect of being forced to see him in the future, when his vanity had once more been inflated, was most distasteful to her. If only one need be kind to people only when they were experiencing difficulties.

With Phœbe walking respectfully behind her, Sappho went down to the harbour alone. For years

she had tried in vain to make the older woman walk closer to her—conversation was difficult when words or sentences had to be flung over one's shoulder—but Phœbe, who loved the proprieties, always reminded her mistress, somewhat reprovingly, that she was, after all, a slave.

Now, as they walked slowly through the town and down the hill to the port, Sappho could hear Phœbe mumbling to herself and making anything but courteous remarks about Charaxus. In no uncertain terms, she was blaming him for the discomfort she felt walking in the heat. She disliked going out in the summer, she had grown stout, and she hated physical exertion of any kind. The only thing she envied Sappho was her persistent slenderness. Her back is still like the back of a young girl, Phœbe was thinking, as she followed her mistress.

There were many people down by the quays: idlers, lured to the cool of the water's edge, men and women coming to welcome a friend or relative who was arriving, merchants awaiting a cargo, sailors from the anchored ships.

The crowd stepped aside as Sappho passed. She was a familiar figure in Mitylene and most of the people she met knew that she had come to meet her brother. Besides, small as she was, and unimposing in stature, she was the kind of person for whom others always made way quite naturally, whether they knew her or not. There was nothing arrogant or imperious

in her manner, she never gave the impression of being particularly self-assured, but she seemed to emanate a quiet atmosphere of authority.

When she and Phœbe had come close to the spot where the gangway would be laid down, she stopped. Already the ship could be seen gliding into the outer harbour. It was exciting, she thought, to meet a vessel that had been for so long at sea. She was very silent, dreading her brother's booming voice, the sound of which would, in a few minutes, be pounding against her ear.

The glare of the sun on the water hurt her eyes, and she turned her gaze absent-mindedly towards the men and women near her. She saw many familiar faces. She noticed Drakes, Charaxus' old friend and drinking-companion, a rich merchant whose wine her brother had sold in Naucratis with his own.

Sappho's gaze moved on, then stopped. She thought that the young girl standing beside Drakes was the most beautiful creature she had ever seen. Sappho remembered vaguely that Drakes was a widower and had a daughter, and this must be she.

The girl was small, but her slight figure was firm and beautifully proportioned. She was staring intently out towards the approaching ship, and the shadows of her ridiculously long lashes looked like curious lines on either cheek whenever she closed her eyes. Her small mouth was sensuous, but her high forehead and well-cut nose gave her face a

determined expression which could at times, Sappho felt sure, make one forget the soft outline of her mouth and chin.

The upper and the lower part of this youthful face were, in fact, contradictory. Anyone seeing her more objectively than Sappho was doing, might have foretold that when she was older the somewhat grasping, almost greedy expression of her chin and mouth would dominate her face as a whole, making her forehead seem less high, her eyes less childlike.

She was dressed entirely in white. No coloured embroidery interrupted the sheer whiteness of her fine linen *chiton*, which she wore rather short, showing beautifully shaped legs and ankles. She was wearing no jewellery, except the two small gold clasps holding her sleeveless *chiton*, at both shoulders, and a clasp in the girdle.

Several young men in the crowd near Sappho were staring at Drakes' daughter.

"No," Sappho heard one of them saying, "she is too young."

The other man asked some question which Sappho could not hear. The first, standing nearer Sappho, answered again.

"No, people who are not in love with her don't like her."

What an odd remark to make about anyone, Sappho thought, trying not to look at the girl. It cost her an effort to move her head and stare at the

spot before her where her brother's ship was to be moored at the quay. She noticed that she was pressing her thumbs into the palms of her hand with her other fingers, a curious habit she had developed as a child and rarely remembered since. She was not excited as much as she was exultant and very expectant. She felt curiously breathless, but with that relaxing breathlessness a runner feels when, after a tremendous effort, he has finally reached the goal and can rest at last.

She was suddenly aware that the girl had noticed her, and, without turning her head, she glanced at her. And as they looked at each other for a passing moment, they both smiled. The girl flushed slightly, and Sappho, who did not wish to embarrass her, smiled once more, and then moved away in the crowd.

For so many years she had been in the habit of criticising herself, measuring her own reactions, that even now, when every thought seemed at first to be drained from her brain, she was conscious, as she walked slowly forward to meet Charaxus, that she was experiencing none of the reactions usual to her when she first saw or met some woman who attracted her. She felt strangely unphysical, as though she herself, her life and her soul, had been lifted out of her body and were floating somewhere in space in this unpleasant and unromantic harbour which smelled of decay and hot humanity.

She was in a haze when her brother's fat figure

bore down upon her. She spoke the words of welcome expected of her; her voice seemed quite normal, except that it sounded to her as though it were pitched a little lower than usual. She was doing the proper things at the proper moment—of this she was sure, or Phœbe, who had eyes like a hawk and the sensitiveness of a mother for her every mood and action, would have shown in her face that something was wrong.

All the time, however—every minute—while her brother spoke boisterously to old friends and acquaintances, Sappho wondered where the girl was standing. Was she still near Drakes, her father, who had not yet pressed through the crowd to embrace Charaxus? Was her father seeing to it that she was not hurt in the crowd? Was he looking after her properly?

Sappho then realised with a start that, actually, this was by no means the first time she had seen Drakes' daughter. She must have met the child several times without noticing her. And as Sappho's thoughts were suddenly centred round the girl, she remembered, too, that, after the death of his wife, Drakes had asked her whether his daughter could come and live at the Academy. Sappho had refused because she did not like Drakes any more than she liked Charaxus' other friends.

Later, sharing an illusion common to many lovers throughout the ages, Sappho firmly believed that she had always loved this girl, whose name, Atthis, she had forgotten when she saw her in the harbour.

I loved you, Atthis, long ago, when my own girlhood was still all flowers, and you—you seemed to me a small ungainly child.

Charaxus was surprised and none too pleased when his sister announced that she would go with him to Drakes' house for the feast he was giving in honour of his safe return from Naucratis. Charaxus had heard that Sappho rarely left the Academy, that she received her friends there, and never, as a rule, went to parties. And he was always uncomfortable in her presence; she made him feel less self-assured than he was without her, and he wished she would stay at home. To himself he never admitted that she was a distinguished woman.

In his own mind, Charaxus consistently belittled her achievements, and he did not allow it to please his vanity to be seen with her in public and to have people point him out as the brother of this famous poet.

At Drakes' house Sappho saw Atthis again, but the girl ignored her. She was responding, obviously pleased, to the attentions of a young man. One could see by her manner that she adored being flattered, being the centre of attention.

Sappho made no effort to speak to her. She was not going to frighten Atthis by acting hastily. Her experience with Erinna had taught her a bitter lesson, which she had never forgotten. And life had taught her self-control.

No one seeing Sappho at this gathering at Drakes'

house, where she appeared to be as aloof and cool and collected as she always was, could possibly have guessed what was going on in her mind and in her heart. But that night, when she returned to the privacy of her own apartments, she wrote a poem which has survived, and has communicated her emotions to other human beings for twenty-five hundred years. This is the literal translation of these verses:

> It is to be a God, methinks, to sit before you and listen close by to the sweet accents and winning laughter which have made the heart in my breast beat fast, I warrant you. When I look on you, my speech comes short or fails me quite, I am tongue tied; in a moment a delicate fire has overrun my flesh, my eyes grow dim and my ears sing, the sweat runs down me and a trembling takes me altogether, till I am as green and pale as the grass, and death itself seems not very far away;—but now that I am poor, I must fain be content. . . .

* * * * * *

Critics and poets have discussed and translated and imitated this poem for centuries. In about A.D. 250 Catullus made his famous translation into Latin which is called *Ad Lesbiam* and reads:

Ille mi par esse deo videtur,
Ille, si fas est, superare divos
Qui sedens adversus identidem te
Spectat et audit

Dulce ridentem, misero quod omnia
Eripit sensus mihi: nam simul te,
Lesbia, aspexi, nihil, est super mi

* * * * * *

Lingua sed torpet, tenuis sub artus
Flamma demanat, sonitu suopte
Tintinant aures, gemina teguntur
Lumina nocte—

Writing in the third century of our own era, Longinus, the Greek rhetorician, who was completely carried away by his admiration for this poem wrote:

> Is it not marvellous how Sappho has recourse at once to spirit, body, hearing, tongue, sight, flesh, all as quite separate things, and by contraries both freezes and burns, raves and is sane, and indeed is afraid she is nearly dead, so that she expresses not one emotion but a concourse of emotions? Now all such things are characteristic of the lover, but it is the choice, as I have said, of the best and the combination of them into a single whole, that has produced the excellence of the piece.

Since the seventeenth century, when John Hall of Durham wrote the first English version of this poem, a number of English poets have translated it. J. A. Symonds' translation in Sapphic metre, with the exception of the last line, gives an impression of the verses in English:

Peer of gods he seemeth to me, the blissful
Man who sits and gazes at thee before him,
Close beside thee sits, and in silence hears thee
Silverly speaking,

Laughing love's low laughter. Oh this, this only
Stirs the troubled heart in my breast to tremble!
For should I but see thee a little moment,
Straight is my voice hushed;

Yea, my tongue is broken, and through and through me
'Neath the flesh impalpable fire runs tingling;
Nothing see mine eyes, and a noise of roaring
Waves in my ear sounds;

Sweat runs down in rivers, a tremor seizes
All my limbs, and paler than grass in autumn,
Caught by pains of menacing death, I falter,
Lost in the love-trance.

Not only has this poem, one of the most famous love poems of all literature, been frequently translated: it has also inspired several poets to write imitations. Tennyson, in *Eleänore*, for instance, wrote:

I watch thy grace; and in its place
My heart a charmed slumber keeps,
While I muse upon thy face;
And a languid fire creeps
Through my veins to all my frame,
Dissolvingly and slowly: soon
From thy rose-red lips *my* name
Floweth; and then, as in a swoon,
With dinning sound my ears are rife,
My tremulous tongue faltereth,
I lose my colour, I lose my breath,
I drink the cup of a costly death,
Brimmed with delirious draughts of warmest life.
I die with my delight, before
I hear what I would hear from thee.

Throughout her mature life, Sappho had waited for the great adventure of being completely absorbed by another human being; but now, when she had met Atthis, and this experience had come, the uncertainty, the waiting until she thought it wise to speak to the girl, were painful to her, and she sometimes wished she were back in that dull state of indifference which she had known for so many years. The out-

ward calm she rigidly imposed upon herself whenever she was with the girl—and she arranged to accompany her brother to Drakes' house often—made her impatience all the harder to bear.

It was not difficult for her to persuade Drakes to send Atthis to the Academy, as Sappho very soon suggested. He was flattered by her interest in his daughter, and besides, he led a bachelor existence, and Atthis was often in his way. In common with many men who enjoy an unrestrained life, he differentiated very rigidly between one kind of woman and the other, and he tried—in vain, of course—to keep his many love affairs a secret from his daughter.

The girl was lonely. Her mother had died when she was a small child, and she longed for the affection of an older woman. Besides, in her own little way she was quite as vain as her father (though she was too shrewd to show her vanity as blatantly as he displayed his), and she, too, was pleased by the attentions from this famous woman.

There seems to be no doubt, furthermore, that she was really attracted by Sappho, that she responded to her with all the warmth and spontaneity of her unspoiled youth. And she was fond of Sappho, too. But Atthis was not the type of woman who fell deeply in love, or allowed herself to become too attached to anyone from whom she could not derive some benefit. She was never carried away by her emotions, until or unless she had convinced herself that this would not

harm her vital interests. For, young as she was, Atthis was worldly, and she would not have sacrificed her social prestige, her chances one day to make a rich marriage, for any emotions.

As it was, her prestige in Lesbos was enhanced by her association with the most outstanding woman in Mitylene, and Atthis could allow herself the luxury of falling in love—in so far as she was capable of doing so. Naturally, the young woman was not sensitive or imaginative enough to appreciate that Sappho, who was so passionately in love with her, was one of the greatest lovers known to history.

One wonders whether Atthis had much understanding of the verses Sappho wrote for her, or whether she merely accepted them, as she would have accepted mediocre poetry, as a tribute to her beauty.

Sappho wrote to her, for instance:

> . . . For when I look upon you, then meseems Hermione (the daughter of Helen) was never such as you are, and just it is to liken you rather to Helen than to a mortal maid; nay, I tell you, I render your beauty the sacrifice of all my thoughts and worship you with all my feelings.

* * * * * *

For several years Sappho was happy with Atthis, though never quite at peace, for in moments of honesty with herself she knew that there was no stability in this girl, that, sooner or later, she would leave her. Subconsciously, too, Sappho must have

realised, though for some time she shrank from admitting this to herself, that this young woman would never experience any great or overwhelming emotion. Atthis was too self-centred, she was, by temperament, not able to feel anything beyond the boundaries of her own self. Her spiritual antennæ were too commonplace for her to understand the greatness of Sappho's personality or her genius.

Sappho did not, however, care whether the girl appreciated or understood her or not, as long as she stayed with her. She saw Atthis as she wanted her to be, and in her imagination Sappho idealised this rather trivial creature.

Sappho's devotion to Atthis was like that of Pygmalion, the legendary King of Cyprus, for the statue of a girl which he had made himself. He had begged Aphrodite to bring this statue to life. In the same way, Atthis, the Atthis whom Sappho loved, was really a creation of her own fantasy.

Even had Sappho judged Atthis less subjectively, she would have been indifferent to the defects in the girl's character. Hers was never a moralising attitude: Atthis made her supremely happy, and that was all she asked of the gods. For she had become less disdainful of them; in moments of rare beauty she was convinced that they must exist and that they were good.

> . . . I should fly to the very foot of your mountains [Sappho wrote to Atthis at this time] to embrace you, my beloved. . . .

Atthis was madly possessive of Sappho, but her desire to monopolise Sappho's time was prompted more by vanity than by affection. When Cleïs—a grown-up and very worldly Cleïs—came home from Chios, and Sappho devoted many hours of each day to her, Atthis had outbursts of jealousy until she realised that in this she had no influence whatsoever on Sappho.

For Cleïs needed a great deal of attention; she had obviously returned to Mitylene willing to forget their former misunderstandings. The separation from her mother had helped her to see Sappho more objectively, and the girl approached her with an open mind, as people who are potentially friends draw near to each other. Sappho was glad that she had sent her away; she was grateful that no disharmony with Cleïs was likely to mar her happy existence.

Never had Sappho written as much or as well. Her poems to Atthis were probably the chief reason why, in the year A.D. 380, under Pope Gregory Nazianzen, and again in 1073, under the rule of Gregory VII, "orgies of destructiveness," as Edwin Marion Cox so rightly called them, occurred, and much of her poetry was burnt by the Church.

Tiny fragments—a word here and there, a disjointed sentence addressed to Atthis—still exist.

". . . heart . . . altogether . . . I can . . . shall be to me . . . shine back"—

". . . fair face . . . engrained . . ."—

" It is not you who are . . . to me . . . so long as you wish . . ."—

" And golden pulse grew along the shores "—

" Come, O divine shell, yield thy resonances to me "—

" But, come, be not so proud of a ring."

Atthis had been at Sappho's Academy for several years. She was quick, her mind and her body were young, subtle and alert. Her superficial talents concealed the fact that, as far as her attitude towards work was concerned, she was a born dilettante. She had an excellent memory, she could learn and remember the steps and the rhythm of a dance better than most of the other girls. Often she led the dances at religious festivals.

Atthis had soon become a leader among the students, and she loved her power over them. Anactoria, too, usually so dignified and distant, came under the spell of Atthis' charm. For years Anactoria was dominated by a romantic and unfulfilled attachment to this girl. Anactoria never mentioned her own feelings, however, for, despite her romanticism, she was a realist, and she knew that she could never compete with Sappho in the girl's affections, even had she wanted to do so. And she did not want to do so, for she was Sappho's friend, and Sappho loved this younger woman. Atthis was merely puzzled by Anactoria's reticence; she was too crude to appreciate Anactoria's loyalty, or her gallant attitude.

Sappho had taught Atthis a great deal about music

and poetry; she was able to distinguish good verse from bad. A born imitator, she soon wrote adequate verse herself. Atthis was a success as a pupil. Sappho must have known, however, that the young woman's talents were not unusual, though she was none the less proud of her.

In time Atthis began to think of herself as a distinguished artist. In her own mind she exaggerated her gifts. She saw herself as a second Sappho, admired and fêted by everyone in Mitylene, and by men and women abroad. She imagined herself walking to the market-place and having people nudge each other, pointing her out as a great writer.

The fact that she was Sappho's acknowledged favourite no longer pleased and flattered her. She was beginning to find this rôle of disciple irksome. She wanted to be famous on her own account, and the obvious pride Sappho took in her mediocre achievements irritated her. She became moody, and a discontented expression frequently made her face less beautiful. Ambition for personal success was taking possession of her, and was gradually becoming an obsession.

She was bitterly aware that never would she be as well known as Sappho, never, as long as she stayed with her, would she be noticed as anything but the older woman's pupil. And as she could not outshine Sappho before others, Atthis found twisted but intense pleasure in showing Sappho, and herself, what power

she had over her teacher. In common with most small-minded individuals, whose little world is limited to personal emotions, no matter how well educated they may be, she derived a great satisfaction from rousing her lover's jealousy.

Whenever Atthis was attentive to any of her fellow-students, whenever she disturbed Sappho's peace of mind, Atthis was contented. A sense of her own power filled her with pride, and she was not the type of woman who cared whether she hurt anyone else or not.

Atthis began to show her irritation when Sappho made suggestions about her poetry, asked her to lead the dance more quickly or more slowly. Atthis considered herself a finished artist. She resented any interference in her work.

Naturally, in this frame of mind she was particularly receptive to flattery. And one day, when she happened to meet Andromeda, Sappho's rival in Mitylene, she listened eagerly to the laudatory remarks this woman made about her verses and her music.

Andromeda, Atthis thought with self-satisfaction, appreciates my talents ; she is not jealous of my abilities, as Sappho is.

Atthis remained at the Academy for some time after this, but actually this meeting with Andromeda was the beginning of the end of the girl's relationship with Sappho. Sappho, usually severe with herself in facing the truth, would not accept this fact for many weeks. She tried to make herself believe that Atthis

was merely suffering from a passing mood of discontent and general dissatisfaction with life and with herself.

> Lo! love the looser of limbs stirs me [Sappho wrote at this time], that creature irresistible, bitter-sweet; but you, Atthis, have come to hate the thought of me, and run after Andromeda in my stead.

Phœbe, who had always despised Atthis, went round with a gloomy expression on her face. Her simple mind could not fathom why this trivial, worthless girl should make Sappho—the great Sappho and her mistress—so unhappy. One morning Sappho was awakened by Phœbe, who was moving about the room, muttering to herself.

At first, rousing herself from a disturbed and heavy sleep, she could not hear what the old woman was saying. Then she caught the words: "No pride, only vanity; no strength, only stubbornness; no brains, only an echo."

Sappho felt her body grow tense as she listened to Phœbe's mutterings. She knew that the slave, who talked to herself more and more often as she grew older, was referring to Atthis.

"No pride, only vanity. . . ." The words dug themselves into Sappho's mind sharply, like a hard, physical object. She lay very still, pretending that she was asleep.

As soon as Phœbe had left the room, Sappho rose quickly. She refused to remain passive, to give up

without a fight this thing which meant more than anything had meant to her in her life before. As she sat at her elaborate dressing-table making up her face with the utmost care, she resolved that she must, above all, remain calm. Whatever happened, Atthis must never know how much she was hurting her. For Sappho had pride, though little vanity.

When she was dressed, she sent for Atthis and talked to her quietly. The girl, who was familiar with every nuance of this beautiful voice, was frightened by the low, death-like quality in it this morning. Nothing is known of their conversation, but the fragments of several poems, which Sappho wrote afterwards, indicate some of the things she must have said.

> . . . with whom [one of these fragments, in which Sappho referred to Andromeda, reads] you are mingled in a vagrant friendship which deems that beautiful which many may have for the asking. . . .

And then, overcome by her own fierce jealousy, Sappho must have described Andromeda to Atthis as she really was: a petty provincial woman with petty tastes and impulses.

> And what countrified wench [she wrote bitterly] in countrified clothes fires your breast, though she knows not how to draw her gown over her ankles?

And in another fragment:

> Andromeda has driven a fine bargain.

Sappho knew when Atthis left her room that morn-

ing that the situation was hopeless. The girl had tossed her head and pouted. Sappho's self-control and dignity made her feel small and insignificant. And Atthis hated feeling insignificant.

As Sappho looked at her stubborn face, from which all tenderness had gone, she was overwhelmed by the tormenting realisation that she had wasted the greatest emotion of her life, the best she had to give, on a woman who was beautiful, but quite worthless.

If only this bitter thought had made her care less, but naturally it did not.

When Atthis left the Academy, the other students, who knew, of course, what this parting meant to Sappho, had expected her to show some signs of her grief. But she remained almost expressionless. Her self-control did not break even when Atthis, in momentary regret at what she was losing, broke down and wept. She wept, not so much because she was sad at leaving Sappho, as because she was greedy, and wished, for one foolish moment, that she could have everything: Andromeda and Sappho both.

Sappho did not weep. She was not the type of woman who found comfort in abandoned grief. She was quieter than usual for several days after Atthis had left; she spoke rarely; but otherwise nothing in her manner, as far as her students were aware, had changed.

She had thought that nothing could increase her sense of utter desolation, of emptiness and of frustra-

tion. A feeling that she had failed, utterly, in keeping the affection of the one woman she had ever really loved, added a sense of her own inadequacy to her unhappiness. But that was not all; for on the day on which Atthis left, Cleïs had clung passionately to the departing girl, and Sappho suddenly knew how blind she had been, how selfish for so long, not to have seen that Cleïs, too, had been attracted by Atthis.

Atthis had never taken any notice of Cleïs, who had followed her round since her return from abroad. Now Cleïs blamed her disappointment on her mother. As Atthis moved away, followed by the slaves Andromeda had sent to fetch her, Cleïs looked at Sappho, and there was animosity in the girl's expression. Then she turned and walked into the house without another word.

Sappho found it difficult to think clearly when she went into her own apartments and lay down. Only two words came to her, and she repeated them again and again, mechanically: Atthis and Cleïs. Atthis and Cleïs, both gone from her. She was quite alone, she would live the rest of her life with strangers.

Her students did not know what agony she was suffering, her writing materials on her lap, as she sat by herself, evening after evening, in her room. She could not write. She felt that never again would she care for any woman, and the thought came to her one night—the thought most terrible for any creative artist—that her inspiration depended more than ever before on purely subjective emotional experiences.

Without them she was finished, done for. The end.

Sometimes it comforted her to write to Atthis, though these letters were never sent. One of them, reflecting her great unhappiness, has been handed down the centuries. This letter, written in Sapphic metre, had been copied and re-copied after her death, and was finally preserved on a seventh-century manuscript:

> So I shall never see Atthis more, and in sooth I might as well be dead. And yet she wept full sore to leave me behind and said: "Alas, how sad our lot; Sappho, I swear 'tis all against my will I leave thee." And I answered her: "Go your way rejoicing and remember me, for you know how I doted upon you. And if you remember not, O then I will remind you of what you forget, how dear and how beautiful was the life we led together. For with many a garland of violets and sweet roses mingled you have decked your flowing locks by my side, and with many a woven necklet made of a hundred blossoms your dainty throat; and with unguent in plenty, both of the precious and the royal, have you anointed your fair young skin in my bosom, and upon a soft couch had from the hands of gentle serving-maids all that a delicate-living Ionian could desire; and no hill was there, nor holy place nor water-brook, whither we did not go, nor ever did the crowded noise of the early spring fill any wood with the medley-song of nightingales, but you wandered thither with me. . . .

CHAPTER ELEVEN

WHEN Atthis had gone, and her presence no longer made it difficult for Sappho to think about her objectively, she often wondered whether, if the girl had stayed with her a little longer, this parting might not have been less painful. Inevitably, Sappho would have experienced a growing impatience with the younger woman's small-minded vanity, and this critical attitude would gradually have undermined her devotion. Then their separation would not have come about so suddenly, her feelings for Atthis would have ebbed away slowly. Sappho resented the fact that Atthis had been taken from her at the height of her passion.

As it was, Sappho never really recovered from the shock of losing Atthis. Something vital had gone out of her when the girl left the Academy. An overpowering apathy took possession of her, and settled down on her obstinately, like a suffocating blanket. Nothing seemed to matter.

Sappho was not profoundly saddened when Cleïs, now frankly eager to leave home, married a commonplace wealthy citizen of Mytilene and left the Academy. Naturally Sappho was sorry that her daughter was going away, that she had chosen henceforth to lead a humdrum existence; but this did not disturb her profoundly, as it would have done a short time before. And when Anactoria, her devoted and faithful friend,

set sail from Lesbos to return to her home, Sappho remained strangely aloof; it was as though this parting had occurred years ago or was happening to someone else.

Sappho had grown spiritually numb; she felt at times as though she had moved into a world beyond human emotions, a curiously lifeless world where neither sorrow nor happiness could touch her. In her youth she had believed that when she grew older, and was no longer under the domination of intense personal experiences, she would be calm and resigned; but she discovered, to her distress, that though emotional realities no longer seemed to exist for her, they had not been supplanted by a sense of peace. Her indifference to life held nothing of resignation. On the contrary, she was beginning to be haunted by a fear of old age, for her sense of beauty had not been dulled. And she hated looking at herself in a mirror. Often she wanted to throw her mirror away; she was still using the one with the Aphrodite handle given her by Chloe so many years before.

With a tremendous effort, witnessed and understood by no one but Phœbe, Sappho refused to allow her state of mind to influence her outward life. Often when she awoke in the morning after a troubled sleep, she longed to remain in bed, to hide from the world in her own room, thus avoiding the problems she would be forced to confront during the day. She never gave way to this weakness; she would rise quickly, dress

carefully and prepare herself for the day among her students, though even her work was no longer any real comfort to her.

Sappho had never cared anything about her fame, and as she grew older it meant less than nothing. It would have left her untouched had she known that later the great Plato would remember and praise her: "Some say there are nine Muses; but they should stop to think. Look at Sappho of Lesbos; she makes a tenth." Or that Antipater would remark that "her song surpasses the songs of women even as Homer's the songs of men."

The deference shown Sappho by her fellow-countrymen, by the entire Greek world, had, in fact, become painful to her, for it reminded her of the greatest loss of all: she rarely knew that exultant joy of creating, of writing poetry—a joy that had been the source of the greatest satisfaction to her throughout her life. Now, when she took up her stilo, she had, consciously, to use her brains, while formerly words and verses had formed themselves with no conscious effort of the mind. Only occasionally did the old inspiration come back to her, the old feeling of excitement when she wrote.

The existing fragments of her poems reflect her bitterness and her growing discontent. Disconnected fragments show what she was suffering:

"For those I have done good to do me the greatest wrong."

". . . because of my pain . . ."—
". . . giver of pain. . . ."—
" The knowing gods evoke tears forthwith . . ."

One of Sappho's verses, written at this time, and complete as far as it goes, is profoundly moving in its desolation :

The Moon is gone
And the Pleiads set,
Midnight is nigh ;
Time passes on,
And passes ; yet
Alone I lie.

Sappho never again saw Atthis, except when, by chance, she passed her in the market-place or in the roads of Mitylene. Then, as Andromeda was usually with her, they spoke to each other only to exchange conventional greetings. Atthis was as far removed from the life at Sappho's Academy as though she had moved to another city.

It is not known whether Sappho wrote poems to Atthis at this time, poems which in any case she would not have sent her. No fragments remain, if she did. But occasionally, when there was any news to tell the girl, Sappho sent her a letter. One of them, in verse —a message telling Atthis that Anactoria had left Mitylene—is unforgettable in its dignified, lingering sadness. The literal translation reflects Sappho's hopelessness :

Atthis [this letter begins simply] our beloved Anactoria dwells in far-off Sardis, but she often sends her thoughts

hither, thinking how once we used to live in the days when you were like a glorious Goddess to her and she loved your song the best. And now she shines among the dames of Lydia as after sun-set the rosy-fingered Moon beside the stars that are about her, when she spreads her light o'er a briny sea, and eke o'er flowery field, while the dew lies so fair on the ground and the roses revive and the dainty Anthrysc and the melilot with all its blooms. And oftentimes while our beloved wanders abroad, when she calls to mind the love of gentle Atthis, her tender breast, for sure, is weighed down deep with longing; and she cries aloud for us to come thither; and what she says we know full well, you and I, for flower-tressed Night that hath the many ears calls it to us along all that lies between.

* * * * * *

Sappho derived some solace from writing letters, from recalling to the minds of her correspondents the happiness they had shared before her spirit seemed to grow numb within her. She did not realise that this was a dangerous comfort, that she was looking into the past with sad regrets, instead of turning her mind, buoyantly, towards the future. After all, she was not yet fifty. She must have written many letters to Anactoria, and in the one that has been preserved on a second-century papyrus she once again showed the height of her creative genius. C. R. Haines' [1] version has been quoted after the literal translation.

Some say [the literal translation reads] the fairest thing in all the world is a host of foot, and some a navy of ships,

[1] C. R. Haines, *Sappho, The Poems and Fragments.* Routledge and Sons, London, 1926.

but to me 'tis the heart's beloved. And 'tis easy to make this understood by any. Helen, who far surpassed all mankind in beauty, chose for the best of men the destroyer of all the honour of Troy, and thought not so much either of child or of parent dear, but was led astray by Love to bestow her heart afar; for woman is ever easy to be bent when she thinks lightly of what is near and dear. See to it then that you remember us Anactoria, now that we are parted from one of whom I would rather the sweet sound of her footfall and the sight of the brightness of her beaming face than all the chariots and armoured footmen of Lydia. I know that in this world man cannot have the best; yet to wish that one had a share in what was once shared is better than to forget it.

And C. R. Haines:

Some think a gallant navy on the sea,
And some a host of foot or horse, to be
Earth's fairest thing; but I declare
The one we love more fair.

Right easy is the proof, that all may know
How true my saying is, for Helen, though
Much mortal beauty she might scan,
Judged him the fairest man

Who in the dust Troy's majesty defiled,
Nor rather of her parents dear and child
Had thought, but, Cypris-led, astray
Cherished an ill love's way;

For nowise hard is woman's will to sway
If from home thoughts she lightly turns away.
So now fair Anactoria be
In memory nigh to thee

Whose sweet foot-fall I would more gladly hear,
And the bright glory of her face see near,
Than Lydian chariots in the field
And foot with spear and shield.

Full well we know that mortals may not fare
In all things well; albeit to crave a share
In what is well is not denied
If heaven be ón our side.

As the years passed, Sappho's loneliness, and her detachment from other human beings, made life seem increasingly unreal. The fact that she had no intimate friend, no one, except Phœbe, who was really close to her, no one with whom she would grow old, caused her existence to lack stability and continuity. She did not see the future stretch out before her in companionship and warmth; each day, on the contrary, seemed like a separate effort which had to be made, a disjointed span of time, a meaningless passing of hours.

Pride, however, and courage born of a desire to live each day well, to finish each task neatly, whether it was meaningless to her or not, held her upright. She was as fastidious about her appearance as she had always been, and every morning she dressed carefully before she left her private apartments to join her pupils.

At moments her mental isolation caused mad thoughts to haunt her. One of her fragments indicates that at one moment she contemplated marrying only to have another child, a human being who would be with her to the end. Anything was better than this feeling of being utterly alone, cut off from life. There were still plenty of young men who would have married her gladly. Some of them were in love with

her; another was ambitious, and would have been flattered had she consented to marry him.

Naturally, when Sappho seriously confronted the possibility of a second marriage, she realised that this had, of course, been a mad impulse; the desire for another child had been merely the expression of a momentary panic, a wild desire to escape somehow from herself.

One young suitor must have seriously hoped that she would marry him, for there are two fragments addressed to him. It should be mentioned that these two fragments are the only lines of Sappho known to us which were addressed to a man.

Her young suitor's persistence annoyed her, but she had no wish to hurt his feelings. She did not consider it any concern of his why marriage, the thought of living with any man, was quite impossible for her. So, to appease him, she told him that she was too old for him.

Her first message to him was restrained:

> . . . But if you love me, choose yourself a younger wife; for I cannot submit to live with one that is younger than I.

The young man, who knew that Atthis and the other women with whom she had lived had been much younger than she was herself, was not satisfied with this answer, and he told Sappho so. Age made no difference, he assured her.

She then realised that only a more realistic refusal

would finally relieve her of his bothersome faithfulness, and in the second verse she wrote to him she told him more frankly why she would be grateful if he would try to forget her. Unfortunately, only disconnected sentences of the second half of this verse have been preserved:

> . . . if my breast could still give suck and my womb were able to bear children, then would I come to another marriage bed with unfaltering feet; but nay, age now maketh a thousand wrinkles to go upon my flesh, and Love is in no haste to fly to me with his gift of pain.—. . . of the noble . . . taking . . . O sing us the praises of her of the violet-sweet breast. . . ."

* * * * * *

In these poems to her unwanted suitor, Sappho exaggerated her age, but few women in history can have resented growing older as poignantly as she resented it. For she adored youth almost as much as she loved beauty, and, despite her apathy, her growing revulsion against old age was never lessened.

There is a peculiar and rather terrible bitterness in those of her poems written when she was ageing which have been handed down to us. Obviously her impotent anger against the passing years made her turn against herself, caused her to have a distorted idea of the marks which age was inflicting on her body.

The greater part of two of these poems, both of which are painful to read, have been restored by Professor Edmonds. Neither of these poems needs

any comment. Both are addressed to the pupils at her Academy:

> You dishonour the good gifts of the buxom Muses, children, when you say "we will crown you, dear Sappho, best player on the lyre."—Know you not that my skin is all wrinkled with age, my hair is turned from black to white, my teeth are but few remaining, and the legs can scarce carry the body you used to join once in the dance to foot it nimbly as the little fawns, nimblest of living things? Yet I cannot help it. Not even God himself can do what cannot be; and surely as starry Night follows rose-armed Dawn and brings us darkness to the ends of earth, Death tracketh everything living and catcheth it in the end, and even as he would not give his beloved wife to Orpheus, so he ever thinks to keep prisoner every woman that dies, for all he should let her follow the song and string of her spouse. But I, be it known, love soft living, and for me brightness and beauty belong to the desire of the sunlight; and therefore I shall not crawl away to my lair till that needs must be, but continue loved and loving with you. And now this is enough for me, nor indeed would I pray for more. . . .
>
> * * * * * *

These last lines reflect Sappho's determination to go on. The second poem, on the other hand, more tragic even than the first, contains not a single note of optimism or hope. No one can say how many weeks or months or perhaps years elapsed between the writing of the two. In the second she writes:

> You had crouched silent behind the great bay-tree, children, when I passed yesterday on my way to the town; and in a moment all was sweeter for me when I saw you. Ah, but I drank that draught with thirsty eyes. Aye, the

women that went with me thought me suddenly become a strange fellow-wayfarer and heedless of my company, and sometimes I scarcely heard them; for a humming overwhelmed my ears and my poor dear spirit flew away with my wits. Such things, it seems, are of fate, and methought, gentle maidens, I would come and visit you, but alas, when I did you were too quick, and shut me out. Yet I saw a fair sight ere the door was closed, and the very clothes on your backs being your clothes, thrilled me through.

* * * * * *

It was only in moments of intense despair that Sappho allowed the misery expressed in this poem to overwhelm her. Usually, no matter how much she suffered at the thought of growing older, she gallantly tried to direct her imagination into other and less personal channels. In what was probably a long poem she told the story, which later became a famous legend, about Endymion, a young man with whom Selene, the Moon Goddess, fell in love.

A *Scholiast*, or commentator, mentions her poem in a marginal note on one of the pages of the *Argonautica* by Apollonius of Rhodes, who lived about 200 B.C.

This is the only reference to Sappho's poem about Endymion, but the story lived on, and we know that Selene, who wanted to preserve Endymion's youth for ever, "sent him into perpetual sleep on Mount Latmus in Caria, so that he might always remain young and beautiful," and she could gaze down upon him every night when she was shining in the sky.

Obviously Endymion symbolised for Sappho eternal

youth, regardless of sex, but it is significant of her attitude, that in her story the youth sleeps on for ever, never wakening to respond to the Moon Goddess, and the Goddess, in turn, had no desire for him to be roused. She desired only to gaze at him: at this symbol of eternal youth.

When Sappho began to fantasy in this manner about youth, she decided that she was really too old to teach young people. Besides, despite her passion for Youth as such, her young and mentally immature students began permanently to pall on her.

She decided to close the Academy for good. She was efficient and business-like about this important decision. Her ability to act when necessary had not been lessened. Her low voice was crisp and firm as she gave orders and made her final arrangements.

Phœbe, really old now, and already feeble, helped her as best she could to move from the big house to another smaller home on a hill on the other side of the town. Sappho seemed to be more cheerful than she had been for a long time. She had apparently resigned herself to retiring from active life, and the townspeople of Mitylene spoke in great respect of the graceful manner in which she was growing old. The approval of these people, to whose opinions she had always been so indifferent, now meant something to Sappho. She knew by their admiration that, in this last great effort to control herself, not to complain, to hold her head as high as ever, and to face her loneliness with the

courage she admired in others, she had succeeded. Her self-respect was unimpaired. She had not failed herself. Besides—and this, too, was important—as her friends and acquaintances esteemed her for growing old so charmingly, no one would pity her. And pity would have been the most unbearable pain of all. Sappho could not have borne their pity.

Actually, of course, it would never have occurred to Sappho's fellow-citizens to feel sorry for her. They considered her fortunate: there were many people who would have been proud to be her friends, she had perfect health, no economic worries, fame, a charming home, and her daughter had married well. Many women of Sappho's age went through years of irksome depression, and none of her acquaintances could have understood why her situation was any different from theirs.

Sappho, however, was conscious of this difference. She knew that the interest these other women felt for their household and their friends, the lasting affection they had for their children and husbands, helped them to forget the passing of time. Age did not affect the routine or the purpose or the essential content of their lives, whereas for her, a writer of passionate and intensely personal verse, old age virtually meant the end of her active and inspired working life.

The idea of suicide must have occurred to her soon after Atthis left her and she began to feel that she was growing old; but at first she did not allow herself to

consider this possibility seriously, because life was, to her, a precious gift, and not one to be thrown lightly away. She would have thought it ungallant to end her life without making an effort to adjust herself to age. Perhaps she tried to write more impersonal verse, perhaps she attempted to give up writing altogether and spend her days reading. Whatever escape she had sought, however, it is clear that she had not found a way out.

It is not known just when she decided to take her own life, but one thing is certain: the resolve to do so before old age had really conquered her was not born of hopelessness. On the contrary, her suicide was prompted by such feelings of self-preservation as were still alive within her. She would preserve herself by dying now; her body would never be wrinkled and ugly, her mind would always have been alert.

She was so happy when she had made her decision that she seemed younger than she had been for years. Phœbe was puzzled only for a little while. Then she understood, and Sappho was aware that she understood. They did not discuss Sappho's resolve, but, without speaking, Sappho had raised her hands, and then held out the right one to the old slave. Phœbe shook her head. "Later," she had whispered, and Sappho knew that Phœbe, who was deeply religious, wanted to see that no funeral rite was omitted. Only when the gods had given their final blessing to her mistress would she, too, go the way Sappho had chosen.

Very slowly, one night, Sappho walked out into the sea, and never returned to the shore alive. There was a full moon, and as she glanced down at the reflection of her face in the water, she was amazed to see how young and buoyant and happy she looked. And she knew then that the pattern of her life was completed—to have added another day or month or year would have been unbeautiful and unlovely.

Sappho was buried in Mitylene. For generations her fellow-citizens must have guarded and cherished her grave, for it was still well cared for towards the end of the second century B.C., when Antipater of Sidon wrote an epitaph for it. This epitaph is included in the *Greek Anthology*.

> It is Sappho that you hide, O Æolian earth, who amongst the immortal Muses is praised as the mortal Muse, who by Aphrodite of Cyprus and by Eros together was reared, who with Persuasion wove the everlasting garland of the Muses of Pieria, who was the delight of Hellas, and of yourself the glory. O goddesses of Destiny that spin thrice-wound thread of Fate from your distaffs, why did you not spin an all-imperishable day for the poetess who wove the imperishable gifts of the Muses of Helicon?

And in the middle of the first century of our own era, Tullius Laureus, Cicero's freedman, wrote another epitaph, which has been translated by Francis Hodgson:

> Stranger, who passest my Æolian tomb,
> Say not "The Lesbian poetess is dead";

Men's hands this mound did raise, and mortal's work
Is swiftly buried in forgetfulness.
But if thou lookest, for the Muses' sake,
On me whom all the Nine have garlanded,
Know thou that I have Hades' gloom escaped:
No dawn shall lack the lyrist Sappho's name.

CHAPTER TWELVE

SAPPHO'S fame had spread so far that she had become a legendary figure in Greece long before her death. Her profile, as engravers imagined it to be, appeared on coins; busts of her were proudly displayed in city halls all over the Empire. It was little wonder, therefore, that her own contemporaries, and succeeding generations, eagerly accepted a dramatic tale of her death.

This legend about Sappho cannot be ignored in any biography, for it is still frequently accepted as fact by her male biographers. This legend says that when she was a woman of about fifty, she fell madly in love with a beautiful youth named Phaon, who left her and went to Sicily. In her despair, so the legend continues, Sappho followed him, and then, in Leukas, on the western coast of Greece, she flung herself from the already famous Leucadian rock because she refused to live without him.

Many historians, eager to accept the Phaon legend as a fact, have not allowed themselves to be puzzled by the glaring inconsistencies of this tale. For it is obvious that, if a woman of Sappho's temperament made the effort to leave Lesbos in search of her lover, she would hardly have stopped halfway on this journey to Sicily, and committed suicide before she reached her destination, where she would have found Phaon.

It was obvious why many of these historians, who

made a study of Sappho's life, and her death, were willing unquestioningly to accept the Phaon legend. These historians were all men, and they naturally preferred to believe that, at the close of her life, at least, this great woman found a man necessary to her happiness. Consciously or unconsciously, these historians ignored the symbolism of her own story about the eternally sleeping Endymion, or suppressed this story altogether.

These historians, in other words, none of whom were apparently experts in the psychology of extraordinary women, judged her quite arbitrarily, adjusting their opinions to their prejudices. They never took into account her own point of view, so clearly expressed in every one of her poems.

More than that: they seemed to forget, or not wish to remember, that Sappho was and is a very common name in Lesbos, and that the tales about Sappho and Phaon or any other man might be based on the life of another Sappho, a famous courtesan, who also lived in Lesbos.

Suidas, one of the few historians to review Sappho's life with greater objectivity, categorically denies the Phaon legend in his Lexicon:

> They say [he writes about Phaon] that this Phaon was beloved by many women, among them Sappho, not the famous poetess, but another Lesbian, who failing to win him, threw herself from the Leucadian cliff.

Menander, the comedy writer, who died in 290 B.C.,

was the first known writer to crystallise this legend about Sappho and Phaon into a statement of fact. According to Strabo, who in his *Geography* describes the Leucadian cliff, Menander wrote that here "Sappho first, in wild love-chaise of the proud Phaon, leapt from the far-seen rock."

The belief in this saga was persistent and, with various embellishments, it continued to be told and repeated for over two thousand years. Writing in the *Spectator* in November 1711, Joseph Addison, who was the first Englishman to write a critical essay on Sappho, included a fanciful account of the Phaon legend in his account of her life.

> Sappho the Lesbian [Addison wrote] in love with Phaon, arrived at the temple of Apollo habited like a bride, in garments as white as snow. She wore a garland of myrtle on her head, and carried in her hand the little musical instrument of her own invention. After having sung a hymn to Apollo, she hung up her garland on one side of his altar, and her harp on the other. She then tucked up her vestments like a Spartan virgin, and amidst thousands of spectators, who were anxious for her safety and offered up vows for her deliverance, marched directly forwards to the utmost summit of the promontory, where, after having repeated a stanza of her own verses, which we could not hear, she threw herself off the rock with such an intrepidity as was never before observed in any who had attempted that dangerous leap. Many who were present related that they saw her fall into the sea, from whence she never rose again; though there were others who affirmed that she never came to the bottom of her leap, but that she was changed into a swan as she fell,

and that they saw her hovering in the air under that shape. But whether or no the whiteness and fluttering of her garments might not deceive those who looked upon her, or whether she might not really be metamorphosed into that musical and melancholy bird, is still a doubt among the Lesbians. Alcæus, the famous lyric poet, who had for some time been passionately in love with Sappho, arrived at the promontory of Leucate that very evening in order to take the leap upon her account; but hearing that Sappho had been there before him, and that her body could be nowhere found, he very generously lamented her fall, and is said to have written his hundred and twenty-fifth ode upon that occasion.

Everything about the Phaon–Sappho saga was well suited to make a great and lasting popular appeal, for this legend included two well-known legends, which had for centuries been assimilated into the consciousness of the people. There was, in the first place, the legend about the Leucadian rock, and in the second the independent saga about Phaon.

The legend about the rock is well told by Strabo:

There is a which rock [he writes] which stretches out from Leukas to the sea and towards Cephallenia, that takes its name from its whiteness. The rock of Leucas has upon it a temple of Apollo, and the leap from it was believed to stop love. . . . It was an old custom of the Leucadians, every year at the sacrifice of Apollo, as an apotropiac or averting right, to throw from the cliff some guilty person to whom they had previously fastened all sorts of birds and other winged creatures which by their fluttering might break his fall, a large crowd waiting below in small boats to pick him up and if possible carry him off to safety beyond the frontier.

The legend about Phaon is equally dramatic. It is not surprising that Phaon was chosen as the hero in the legend about Sappho's death, for he was, in himself, a legend of beauty. A popular Greek expression says that a man is "a Phaon in looks and deeds."

The saga about Phaon described him as a young ferry-man "plying for hire between Lesbos and the mainland." One day, disguised as an old and unattractive woman—so the legend goes—Venus took this ferry-boat, and Phaon, being a kindly youth and sorry for the feeble old creature, refused to accept any fare from her.

Venus, deeply impressed by this generosity, presented him with an alabaster box of "unguent, the daily use of which made women fall in love with him," and besides, he remained young and charming for ever.

Considering that, as this story shows, Phaon himself was a purely legendary figure, it is surprising that the combined legend about him and Sappho has been generally accepted as a fact for so many centuries. Actually Ovid, and not the historians, is chiefly responsible for the widespread acceptance of the Sappho–Phaon tale. For Ovid's ode, *Sappho to Phaon*, was known and quoted throughout the ancient world.

The best-known English translation of this "heroic epistle," made by Alexander Pope in 1707, indicates how little Ovid knew or understood Sappho. If this were possible, one might wonder whether, in fact, he

ever read her verse with any real attention or understanding. It is doubtful whether any man who knew anything about the life or work of Sappho could make her say, when she was a woman of fifty, whose dignity had always been an integral part of her nature:

> Stung with my love and furious with despair,
> All torn my garments and my bosom bare,
> My woes, thy crimes, I to the world proclaim,
> Such inconsistent things are love and shame.

Naturally Ovid's interpretation of Sappho's character was accepted by many people, for human beings tend to look down upon, or ridicule, the emotions of others which they cannot understand. Few men and women have imagination as far as the emotions of others are concerned, and the Greek comedy-writers of the Middle Comedy, writing in the fourth century B.C., apparently directed many attacks against Sappho, just as Socrates, too, was ridiculed by Aristophanes. Six of the Middle Comedy-writers—Ameipsias, Amphis, Antiphanes, Diphilus, Ephippus and Timocles—each wrote a comedy called *Sappho*. Only a few fragments of these plays have been preserved, but it is clear from records of criticisms of these comedies that they described her as a comic figure.

These attacks from men of her own tradition would have surprised Sappho far more than the ruthlessness with which her poems were later destroyed by a so-called civilisation of which she had no conception.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

History of Greece. By Victor Durny. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1892.

Greek Life and Thought. By J. P. Mahaffy. Macmillan & Co., London, 1887.

Social Life in Greece. By J. P. Mahaffy. Macmillan & Co., London, 1874.

La Grèce avant Alexandre. By P. Monceaux. Ancienne Maison Onantin, Paris, 1892.

Sexual Life in Ancient Greece. By Hans Licht. Routledge & Sons, Ltd., London, 1932.

Studies of the Greek Poets. By John Addington Symonds. A. & C. Black, London, 1876.

A Critical History of the Language and Literature of Ancient Greece. By William Mure. Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, London, 1850.

Hellas. Vorträge. Von Friedrich Jacobs. R. Friedländer & Sohn, Berlin, 1852.

History of European Morals. By Wm. Ed. Hartpole Lecky. Longmans Green & Co., 1896.

Populäire Aufsätze. By Karl Krumbacher. B. G. Teubner, Leipzig, 1909.

Sappho. By Henry Thornton Wharton. Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., Ltd., London, 1885.

Sappho of Lesbos. By Arthur Weigall. Thornton Butterworth, London, 1932.

Sappho. By C. R. Haines. Routledge & Sons, Ltd., London, 1926.

Sappho. By John Nott. Cuthell & Martin, London, 1803.

Sappho, a Lecture. By Dr. Bernhard Arnold. Publ. by C. G. Füderitzsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, Berlin, 1871.

Sappho. By Bernhard Heine. Eugen Diederichs, Jena, 1907.

La Chaste Sappho. By J. M. F. Bascoul. Librairie Universitaire, Paris, 1913. H. Welter, Editeur.

The Poems of Sappho. By E. M. Cox. Williams & Norgate, London, 1924.

Untersuchungen über das Leben der Sappho. By Alfred Schöne, 1869.

Sappho von einem herrschenden Vorurtheil befreit. By Friedrich Gootlieb Welcher. Göttingen, 1816.

Sappho. Von Paul Brandt. Friedrich Ruhbarth, Leipzig, 1905.

Sappho. By Mary Mills Patrick. Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1912.

Sappho und Simonides, Untersuchungen über Grieschische Lyriker. Von Ulrich Wilamowitz-Moellendorf. Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, Berlin, 1913.

Sappho und Erinna. By F. W. Richter. Beckersche Buchhandlung, Ouedlenburg and Leipzig, 1833.

Alkaos und Sappho. By Theodor Koch. Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, Berlin, 1862.

The Songs of Alcæus. By J. S. Easby-Smith. W. H. Lowdermills & Co., Washington, MCMI.

The Work and Life of Solon. By Kathleen Freeman, M.A. University of Wales Press Board. Humphrey Milford, London, 1926.

Les Chansons de Bilitis. By P. Louys. Librairie de l'Art indépendant, Paris, 1895.

DATE DUE

NOV 5 '74			
OCT 7 1975			
MAY 1 0 '76			
OCT 10 1980			
MAR 1 1985			
JAN 20 1986			
SEP 27 1986			
SEP 01 1996			
MAR 14 2001			
JAN 2 2003			
NOV 03 2006			
OCT 26 201			
OCT 27 201			
GAYLORD			PRINTED IN U.S.A.

3 5132 00164 5449
UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC LIBRARY

39340

Goldsmith, Margaret.
Sappho of Lesbos.

PA
4409
G6